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RENÉ BAZIN

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THOSE OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD

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(*Madame Corentine*)

BY

RENÉ BAZIN

of the French Academy

AUTHOR OF "THE NUN," "THE BARRIER," "REDEMPTION," "THE COMING HARVEST," "THIS, MY SON," ETC., ETC.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

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Clean literature and clean womanhood are the keystones of Civilization. With both dominant there will be no wars—and the houses that are now nothing more than lodging places for the mismated will again become the homes of the happily married.

Then the child will be something more than an undesired hireling-reared unit in the house. It too will have a home and more, for it will be the centre stone in the arch of domestic happiness, like the endearing home-restoring heroine in THOSE OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD, René Bazin's vitalized plea for marriage of the kind—the only kind that is worth while.

HENRY GARRITY

November 6th, 1917

THOSE OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD

(MADAME CORENTINE)

CHAPTER I

Every Sunday they would take the little St. Aubin or Gorey train, get down at any station along the coast, and wander far afield through the fresh Jersey landscape. They always dressed in their best clothes on that particular day, partly out of natural coquetry, and partly to distinguish themselves from crowds of English women in blouses and skirts of cotton-backed satin. They were always unaccompanied, and spent the whole day out of doors, after a quiet fashion of their own, quite content to talk and enjoy themselves together. Madame l'Héréec watched the quick development of her daughter into womanhood with admiring eyes. Simone was just fifteen,

with all the tender charm and budding graces of her age. The elder woman told herself that she needed nothing more than this companionship. She believed that she was confiding in the girl, because from time to time she spoke of trifles in a serious tone. Simone, on her side, felt all the secret pride of those who know they are joy-givers and have the power of making others happy. She felt herself growing up when her mother spoke to her on an equality; she realized the importance of being more strictly looked after, under an appearance of freedom. She guessed that she was bringing balm to a sore heart, but luckily saw no farther. When night fell, after a long day spent alone with her mother, far from the noise of the world, Simone might see that Madame l'Héréec was exhausted and disinclined to talk; still the daughter knew peace and oblivion were making her mother's soul once more as calm and childlike as her own.

One Sunday towards the end of July, they had started as usual, stopping for luncheon at an inn in St. Aubin, and had walked in the heat partly along the road and partly on the cliff to the bay of Sainte Brelade, the most wonderful spot of its kind in

Jersey. Madame de l'Héréec had been resting for more than an hour on the grass-grown sand-hill. Her mourning was chosen with taste. Delicate mauve flowers were arranged between the brim of her straw hat and her soft fair curls. A neighbour's child once exclaimed: "Oh! Madame, there are flowers growing out of your hair!" and since then she had taken to wearing the hat constantly. Now she was sitting motionless, looking straight before her from under her long-stemmed, sun-flecked parasol. What did her eyes behold? A woman of more artistic nature would have been carried away by the beauty of the landscape. Jutting cliffs, rosy with heather, shut in the pale blue waters of the bay, a sandy beach sloped gently round to the corner where the village began, with its red granite Gothic church and the great oak trees, whose branches were wet when the tide rose to its greatest height. Behind all rose green downs, with tier above tier of pretty little houses. But still-life never interested her for long. In this framework of sensuous beauty, which might have been some shore in Sicily in a mist of sunlight, all she beheld was a grey-clad figure, a sailor collar, a white-winged hat. Her

daughter was coming in the far distance, walking at the edge of the sea, drinking in the wind from the east. She watched her between half-shut eyes, in an attitude of utter ease and self-satisfaction, quite content with her own thoughts.

"How graceful and young she is in every movement!" she said to herself; "now she stoops, now she rises. . . . She's growing tall . . . my child! My Simone!"

This wave of affection, recurring regularly and evenly as the movement of the tide, was quite sufficient to occupy her. But mothers in the distance cannot see everything.

Simone had left the middle beach and walked round the seashore to the left of the bay, where the sand is sparse and the rusty base of the cliff is always washed by the sea. She was certainly a fine girl, who might one day be a pretty woman. At present her fresh and vigorous adolescence was expressed by broad shoulders, rather a large waist and very round pink cheeks; but her whole appearance might later change completely. The mouth was rather wide and thoughtful, the nose delicate and slightly curved, and the frank, wide-open eyes of

that brown which turns gold when their owner smiles. Her short skirt, and the chestnut plait held in a tortoiseshell hair-slide, showed that her mother had no intention of dressing her as a woman at present. But her habitually serious expression, and a certain air of resolution about her whole person, seemed somehow out of keeping with short skirts.

Simone walked along, her head held high, intoxicated with sun and ozone, entirely taken up with watching her surroundings, and thinking of nothing but the moment. Some thirty yards away from the rocks she stopped. A boat was lying abandoned on the beach, stern landwards, the prow just beginning to sway in the rising tide. The young girl bent down and read the name, *Edith*. Inevitably the classic allusion came into her mind, *"the swan-necked."* It seemed quite natural for the vessel to be painted white with a gold border like a necklace. At the same moment a young boatman, in a knitted cap and blue jersey bearing the name of the vessel, came from the other side of the beach. As he passed Simone, who did not hear his step, he gave a military salute. "Coming on board, Miss?"

he said, getting into the boat, and smiling till every tooth in his head was visible.

Simone did not pay much attention. "Perhaps you are from St. Malo?" she asked.

The sailor, who was unwinding the cordage round the sail, stopped a minute. "No, Miss, from Lannion."

With the brusque transition natural to her age, the girl became suddenly serious. Her eyes opened to their fullest extent, she gazed at the man, the mast, and the blue pennon overhead with that intense interest we feel in things and people which come from some distant and beloved spot.

"Lannion?" she repeated, "and are you going back?"

"Presently, Miss. You see this is the best wind for us. When we've doubled the point, we make for the Corbière as the nearest, then we get well out into the offing, and in five hours, or five hours and a half, we are up behind Les Sept Isles."

"Oh! Les Sept Isles!" exclaimed Simone, her voice, the most unmistakably characteristic voice of a girl of fifteen, becoming suddenly dreamy. "Les Sept Isles!" she repeated.

"You know the place?"

"Yes."

Seeing her interested, the sailor proceeded: "So, then, you can calculate for yourself. By the time we reach La Passe de Guer with all those rocks and stones, it will be quite dark, and the ebb tide is against us, so we shall have to wait, and we shan't get to Lannion till daybreak." And with a final *"Voilà!"* the man went on with his occupation.

"I say," she began. The man looked up from the mast-step near which he was standing at work. "Do you know a Monsieur l'Héréec at Lannion?"

"*Parbleu!* Monsieur Guillaume in the Rue du Pavé Neuf?"

"Yes."

"I should think I did know him! I meet him two or three times a week coming back from the factory. That's a good fellow, if you like, but he's been unlucky!"

The words were spoken almost in a whisper, as if he were thinking aloud. Simone blushed to the roots of her hair.

"Will you take him a message?" she asked, and, without waiting for an answer, she took out a tiny pocket-book and wrote in pencil:

"Simone, July 20th, 1891," tore out and folded the page, and held it out towards the vessel. "Will you take this?"

The tide had already risen some yards, and the young girl had to put her foot in the water up to the ankle to reach the sailor. Then she sprang backwards.

"Thank you!" she said. "You say you see him sometimes. . . . I wanted to know. . . . Has he aged much?"

She was looking at him now with eyes full of tears.

He seemed vaguely to understand, and lifted his cap.

"He has aged rather, Miss. . . . Grief, you know . . ."

"Is he quite white?"

"Oh, no, not yet; only just a little grey on the temples. He's a good sort, is Monsieur Guillaume."

"And his mother?"

"Ah, she's as white as snow."

"Has she still got her same two servants?"

"Yes, Miss. She's still got Gote and Fantic."

"Then things aren't much altered there. . . . I was afraid . . ."

She stopped for a moment and then went

on: "Has my grandmother had the big lilac-trees cut down that grew beside the road?"

The man scratched his head, and tried to remember: then suddenly he said very cheerfully, "No, Miss, no—I remember passing there in May, and they were in bloom."

Simone would have liked to ask more, all kinds of questions were crowding her mind, but she felt too disturbed to go on. She turned and walked away, choking down sobs, and trying to control herself, while the man looked after her and replaced his cap.

"Poor little soul," he said, "she must be Monsieur Guillaume's daughter."

Simone walked slowly, holding down her head, till she reached the middle of the beach, and then she had completely mastered herself, and stopped crying. She even felt rather pleased and proud at what she had done. It was something more than an ordinary childish impulse. She realized this, and with it came added sweetness at the thought of her father's joy when he should receive a line in her handwriting, a message saying: "I am thinking of you. I am a stranger to you, because we have been parted so long; but I love you. You fill a great

place in all my girlish projects and thoughts. I wish I could see you again. . . . I wish . . . " Ah! the four little words had meant a great deal. And father would understand. Yes, she knew he would understand all she had meant to say. . . .

She felt suddenly awkward when she reached her mother, sitting in her fair, slim beauty, and smiling at her as usual from beneath the black and white striped parasol.

"Well, darling?"

"Well, Mama?"

"I've been alone for more than an hour! What could you have been dreaming about to leave me?"

"You know I never have day-dreams."

"And what boat is that?"

"The *Edith*. Pretty, isn't she?"

Madame l'Héréec noticed that Simone blushed as she answered.

"English?" asked the mother.

"No, Mama."

Simone turned half round towards the bay, to get up her courage, and began to speak quickly. She had made up her mind to conceal nothing.

"She is just going to start," she went on hurriedly. "Look, you see over there by

Ste. Brelade, a boat with two men rowing and one steering; that's the owner who is going back to his ship; it seems the wind is all right for sailing now. When they have doubled that Point they are going out to the open sea to make for Les Sept Isles."

"Oh!"

"The sailor told me. And to-morrow at daybreak they reach Lannion."

"Lannion?"

"Yes, Lannion," answered Simone, turning round.

Little Madame de l'Héréec was no longer smiling. In her surprise and anxiety she tried to read Simone's face, but the girl seemed quite calm and returned her mother's gaze.

"I saw you talking. Do you know the man?"

"No."

"Did he tell you anything?"

"No, nothing," returned Simone. "It was I who asked him to take a note to my father."

Madame de l'Héréec recoiled. "A note to your father? But that was . . ." She stopped short, warned by the instinct of a woman who has known trouble. She knew

the danger of using violent language which might enlist the child's sympathy for the absent parent. Besides, what could she say? Strictly speaking, she had no right to prevent Simone from writing to her father. She controlled herself, but the hands which held her sunshade trembled. She rose, and tapped her skirt gently, to get the sand out of its folds, while she took time to reflect on her next words. Then with an air of exaggerated resignation she began tracing circles in the grass with the tip of the ebony sunshade stick.

"I should not have thought it of you, Simone," she said at last. "Had you anything to tell him?"

"No, Mama."

"Well, but what did you write, my child?"

"My name."

"Only your name?"

"And the date."

A faint smile puckered the corners of Madame de l'Héréec's eyes.

"And you think that will please them?"

She raised her head, and saw she had overstepped the mark. Simone had turned away with tightened lips, and a hard fixed glance; she was watching the sloop as it weighed

anchor. She too was controlling her speech, but she was in a tumult of revolt within. "Not please them," she said to herself. "My father not pleased to hear I still love him? You are wrong! You misjudge him; you have no right to say such a thing to me!" Perhaps the poor child thought that her mother was already repenting of her question. After a short silence she made an effort to speak. "How quickly the little sloop goes, doesn't she?" she said in a muffled voice.

"Yes, very quickly."

They both remained standing for a short time longer, watching the *Edith,* with her high rigging and almost invisible hull, as she slowly glided out of the sunny mouth of the bay. Then they re-crossed the downs, to reach the road to St. Aubin.

Each guessed enough of the other's thoughts to feel uncomfortable. They could not as usual chat with ease, about whatever subject came uppermost. Every sentence was thought out beforehand. That one little line of writing seemed an invisible barrier between them. They tried in all good faith to be their ordinary selves, but quite without success.

When the two women had crossed the down they took a turning to the right. Groups of English passengers from the Fauvel and Royal Blue coaches were walking on the slopes, making the most of the last stopping-stage on the journey, while others were walking to St. Aubin or Don-Bridge stations. Simone and her mother seemed creatures from some other world. The English girls cast barely disguised glances of envy at their supple figures, their charming dresses, and their light, graceful walk. This did not usually disturb Madame l'Héréec or her daughter. Sometimes on Sundays they would even walk slowly on purpose to hear the remarks made about them. They were often taken for sisters, looking so nearly of an age, and so alike in general manner. It amused them, but today they hurried along. They took no notice of anything round them, and did not even feel a wish to give a last regretful look backward, as one does at the close of a happily-spent day.

Once, however, just as the bay of Ste. Brelade was fading into distance, the young girl stopped and tried to distinguish a white spot in the twilight on the edge of the hori-

zon. Feeling herself furtively watched, and the direction of her glance noted, she turned her eyes towards the scattered houses behind the beach and watched their pretty grey, blue, pink or pale-yellow painted frontages faintly glimmering among the trees.

"Do you remember, we were thinking of renting a house here last year?"

Madame l'Héréec ignored the remark.

"Simone, I have never prevented your writing, you know!" she said.

"No, Mama," answered the young girl, with the absent air which checks conversation like a line of asterisks.

"I never did, as you know well. Then why write suddenly, without telling me first?"

They started walking again in silence, each grieved at the mutual misunderstanding, yet more and more convinced of being in the right. As they drew near St. Aubin that touch of freshness and vigour which comes after a warm day, added to the sight of people walking in all directions from the neighbouring valleys, and the sound of a coach-horn from among the trees, seemed to revive the conversation. Simone became

cheerful, confident, quite ready to laugh. Madame l'Héréec herself appeared to forget the incident of the afternoon, and only complained of fatigue.

When the two women got out of the train at St. Hélier, the sun had set. They walked to the left, down Conway Street, a foggy, cheerless road (additionally gloomy on a Sunday, observed English-fashion), and turned into King Street, where they stopped before a rather pretty house, cleaner than its neighbours, and ornamented with a double colonnade over the two front windows. A shop, closely shuttered as were all the others, made a black patch on the ground floor. Above was the sign *A La Lande Fleurie,* with smaller letters on either side forming the words *Bijoux et Emaux, souvenirs et articles de Jersey.*

They went in. A very youthful, rosy-cheeked Jersey servant girl, in a towering cap, came to meet them, carrying a candlestick.

"Has anyone called, Anie?"

"No, Madame. But a letter came this morning after the train had started."

Madame l'Héréec rapidly glanced at the envelope which bore the Perros-Guirec

stamp, recognized the hand-writing, and slipped the letter into her pocket with a nod, as much as to say, "I know what *that* is. It will keep."

She went up to the first floor room, made a light meal of tea and cakes, and settled down in her room to her work-frame, with Simone sitting opposite, an open book on her knees. They sat in their usual places in front of the window; their two faces beneath the large cream-white lampshade wore the settled calm of those who do not expect any one to disturb their solitude. Madame l'Héréec, to avoid actually sewing, had taken up a pen and was tracing in Indian ink some faint and half erased lines in the design of her work. Her slender, skilful hands were never idle. She drew a stroke or two, and leaned back to judge of the effect. Simone, with down-dropped eyelids, slowly followed passages in her book, smiling for an instant at those which pleased her.

Poor Madame Corentine l'Héréec! All who had known her in the past would have easily recognized her. She had aged very little; there was the same fair complexion, the same uneven features with a natural tendency to a smile, the thin, sensitive lips

showing tiny white teeth, the short nose, the pretty blue eyes with their shallow brilliance. Her waves of dull, fair hair were still almost too thick to be twisted into the knot she wore low down at the back of her head, in the style which best showed off her long, slim throat. The blue-veined skin was that of a child, and her head rose as gracefully from the open neck of her black gown as it used to from her white collar in old Perros days.

Ah, the days of Perros-Guirec and Lannion! The friends of her childhood and early youth would have recognized her, but if they could have seen the King Street room they would perhaps have been more charitable in their judgment of her. The proprietress of *La Lande Fleurie,* who had arrived in the island with only the slender capital of her restored dowry, had so perfectly understood the taste of the general public, and had known so well how to supply the commonplace articles constantly in demand with tourists, that she had actually succeeded in successfully keeping a kind of bazaar, no light achievement in a mixed population of French and English. No one came from Southampton or St. Malo to Jersey without buying a piece of island spar jewellery or a

"cabbage" stick from *La Lande Fleurie.* She passed as rich, and was known to have been extravagant in former days. But there was no attempt at luxury in her furniture. The chairs, the wardrobe with looking-glass doors, and the combined work-table and lampstand, were the contents of her bedroom as an unmarried girl, and the lawyer had duly catalogued them after the separation, as "restitution" to the wife. The tablecloth on the centre table, an old-fashioned Indian shawl, had been part of her trousseau. It was still quite fresh and new-looking, and recalled an epoch which separated husbands and wives do not, as a rule, commemorate. Out of economy she had not put anything else in its place. Few people would have believed this of the feather-headed little woman, who had so horrified the respectable matrons of Lannion. There were no luxuries for her personal use. Simone's room, which opened into the one where the two women were sitting, had absorbed everything, because it contained the treasure on which all the love and happiness of the house was centred. Through the half-open door could be seen a bed, with blue satin curtains inset with bands of guipure, and a bevelled

mirror reflecting quantities of ornaments only vaguely distinguishable in the semi-darkness, but evidently arranged and selected with great care.

Still, life at St. Hélier was exile, if not complete solitude. The rooms plainly showed that no visitors ever came into them, and that the family consisted of two lonely lives. Something seemed vaguely lacking. Perhaps it was the presence of a man, or at least some of those faded photographs, often so common and ridiculous, but speaking of a respectable past, and giving the traditional background to the house of a widow and orphan. The two women were silent. The shutters were unfastened, and the mist clung heavily to the window-panes. It drifted slowly in heavy masses down the street, and the lights in the opposite houses seemed shining through wool. Not a sound came from the town. The prospect out of doors was gloomy: even inside the room a kind of enervating, miasmic vapour seemed to have insinuated itself. Oh, how tired they were of inhaling Jersey fog!

Suddenly, amidst the surrounding torpid silence, the bells of a neighbouring church began to ring. The sound was harmonious,

and the chimes melted into each other through the damp air, till they reached the ear in one of those sudden appeals from the outer world which wake us as from a dream. Madame l'Héréec leaned one arm against her work-frame and watched her daughter as she sat reading. Her thoughts had been straying in the painful shadows of the past and possible future.

"Simone, dear!" she said, tenderly.

The young girl raised her eyes and smiled. It was her usual response to any demonstration of affection from her mother. She smiled again, and both went on with their several occupations, convinced of their real attachment to each other. But there are days when human beings want more than such assurances.

"Simone, dear," repeated Madame l'Héréec, "come and kiss me . . . I want it to-night . . . come quite close."

Simone stood up, and with a supple gesture put her book on the table, and sat down at Madame l'Héréec's feet on a low chair.

The mother drew the beautiful dark head into her arms and wrapped the girl close to her breast, which rose and fell with long-suppressed emotion. The fair head bent

down, and between kisses and caresses came the words: "Simone, tell me, you do really love me, don't you?"

"Oh, Mama, I do."

"Much?"

"With all my heart."

"You don't want to leave me?"

"Of course I don't."

"Say it again. Tell me that you are happy here, in this house, with your mother."

"Of course I am quite happy, Mama. Where do you get such ideas from?"

She would have risen, but her mother held her close, and began to weep over her own fate, shedding great heavy tears.

"No, stay still. If you only knew . . . if you only knew. Simone, you hurt me so dreadfully . . . You shouldn't have written unknown to me."

"Unknown to you! I told you directly."

"Well, without asking my consent, if you like . . . that was what wounded me so."

Simone, feeling her mother's clasp relax, smoothed her hair, which Madame l'Héréec's caresses had ruffled, and stood up.

"Now, Mama," she said, turning towards her, "you know you would never have given me permission to write to my father, par-

ticularly in my own name. It is quite natural that I should sometimes think of him."

"Yes, it certainly is natural."

"Well, then, I don't know what you mean."

How could she understand that a tumult of jealousy was filling her mother's heart? How could the mother explain that such an innocent thing as her daughter's writing a word of remembrance to her half-forgotten father wounded the elder woman, and seemed a threat, a weakening of her rights, a distant menace of parting?

Ever since the separation, Madame l'Héréec had lived in hourly dread lest the memory of the husband and father should gradually arise in her daughter's heart, prevail perhaps over her own influence, and sever her last and only tie, the possession of her child. She feared that silent pleading, born of love and pity, which works with unsuspicious natures, turning countless trifles to the profit of the absent, interpreting even silence as regret, glorying in contradictions, and impossible to combat, since it cannot be refuted. Madame l'Héréec let her white hands drop in her lap in utter discouragement.

"Oh, Simone! I am so unhappy tonight!"

The sound of real sorrow in her mother's voice touched Simone directly. She held out both hands to Madame l'Héréec with one of those looks which children only give to their mothers or to the Madonna.

"Don't you know," continued Madame l'Héréec, "that without you my existence would be unlivable? You are too young to remember how hard it was to take up our lives here in the beginning. I used to cry at night when you were in bed and asleep. I thought I should be everything to you, and the idea that one day you would repay me in love for all I was doing for you gave me strength to face rebuffs, miscarried plans, and disappointments, when what I thought good ideas came to nothing . . . until the day when I had the inspiration of starting *La Lande Fleurie.* Oh, my darling! I've worked like a slave ever since, and you know I still do, to dress you well, and buy you pretty things. I've given you a real *chambre de jeune fille,* and I've wanted you to have everything I used to have, and more!"

Simone smiled. Madame l'Héréec felt the girl had not escaped her, and yet she

was irresistibly tempted to try and find how much of the daughter's heart had gone out to "him."

"We were wise to make ourselves happy in our own way and essential to each other," she said, absently touching her canvas with the tip of her pen; "yes, we were right indeed, for no one else cares for us!" . . .

She paused a moment, but no answer came.

"No one!" she continued. "We might have begged our bread, or died; no one would have cared what became of us."

She listened again, pen in hand. At last Simone answered.

"Well, but Mama, there's grandfather Guen."

"Yes, poor man, he writes regularly . . . and gives us Perros news. I am quite sure he would, if necessary, take the long journey he did five years ago to come and see us. . . . But I could not ask anything more of him, and certainly I could not expect him to keep us. . . . You may take my word for it, *they* have quite washed their hands of us. *They* never want to hear either of our names mentioned again." More vague accusations against the mysterious "they," which could

only mean one person who perpetually recurred in Madame l'Héréec's conversation! Simone hated to hear the spiteful pronoun. She disliked being forever set in judgment over her father.

"How can you think such things?" she asked, sadly.

"It is not imagination. I have proved it. There are the facts. What have you to set against them?"

Corentine's manner had become aggressive, as in past conjugal discussions. Her husband was speaking in Simone.

"After all, Mama," said Simone, "you haven't really needed anyone's help, thanks to your own activity and cleverness. It isn't wonderful that nobody has offered to help you. But as to no one taking any interest in us, I certainly have had proofs to the contrary."

"You? I should be curious to know what they were."

"The welcome I received when I used to spend the holidays at Lannion."

"And how many years ago is that?"

"Five," said Simone, in a lower voice.

"Nearly six, my dear. In other words, your father, having taken advantage of his

rights in the beginning (he made enough fuss about his legal right to have you for the month of September), has grown tired of you. Your last visit to Lannion was when you were nine years old, and you are now fifteen. I do not call that taking a deep interest in you."

"Perhaps there are reasons of which I know nothing."

"Reasons? Reasons for a man breaking with his own daughter? Nonsense! It is plainly to be seen that you are determined to make excuses for him in every way." Madame l'Héréec averted her face as she spoke, irritated by the respectful, but unmistakable contradiction with which she had been met twice already that day. Now she looked straight into Simone's eyes. The girl was rather pale, but her face showed no sign of irresolution or timidity.

"Then I am to understand, Simone," said the mother, carefully dwelling on each word, and speaking slowly, "that you would be quite prepared to go to Lannion if you were invited?"

"Yes."

"It would make you happy? You would like to go very much?"

"I think so," answered the poor child, torn between truth and the fear of hurting her mother's feelings, "that is, if I were invited."

"Well, then, I should think you will have to wait some time for the invitation!" said Madame l'Héréec, with a hard laugh. "Meanwhile, you had better go to bed. You are tired, and talking nonsense." . . .

Simone rose at once, and, leaning over her mother, gave her a long kiss, as if to beg pardon for her boldness.

"Good-night," she said. "Aren't you going to bed too?"

"Oh! I am not sleepy."

The mother watched her pass beyond the circle of light from the lamp. One ray caught the chestnut gleam on a dark plait as the girl went through the door. Madame l'Héréec still sat gazing after Simone, when her visible presence had departed. The girl walked about her room a little and took up some of the ornaments on the mantelpiece, as if for the pleasure of handling something cold with hard edges. The mother heard the swish of a silk ribbon being untied, the soft thud of knees on a fur rug, a hurried murmur of prayer, and the silky rustle of garments dropped one by one on a chair. Then

she caught a vague glimpse of a girlish figure, in a froth of lace, slipping into bed. She saw the virginal profile with closed eyes framed in the white aureole of the pillow. The only movement in the half-darkened room was the regular rise and fall of the sheet, and the only light, a dim ray of gold from the lamp, shining on Simone's hair, where it had escaped from the net.

Madame l'Héréec stood looking at her for a while, smiling with pride. No incident was too trifling to divert her mind. Passing circumstances did not make her forget her troubles completely, but she could always get rid of the most painful impression for a time. All pain or sorrow affected her changeable and nervous disposition in sudden attacks, so to speak. As she looked at Simone, her thoughts reverted to her own youth. "She is not a bit like me," reflected the mother. "Our characters are totally different! She looks like a Madonna as she lies there sleeping. I was always laughing."

She bent down again over her work-frame, and tried to go on with the tracing. But the comparison of their girlhood had carried her far away, and, instead of the meshes of the canvas, she was seeing once again her home

with her father, the Captain, in the old, tumble-down house standing in a sheltered kind of recess at the back of the quay at Perros-Guirec. How comfortable it was, sheltered from the wind and prying neighbours. And it had a view, too, of the roadstead lying between its banks of swelling hills. The eye could see as far on the one side as the rocky prominence of the Castle, and the round tortoise-shaped Ile de Thomé, and on the other out to the reef of rocks where the water was dotted with a long line of foamy specks reaching out to the far horizon. In summer the rocky line looked like a gigantic heap of tea-roses floating on the blue water.

All the distant landscape, the wooded, ferny valleys, the cliffs, half covered with heather, and brown with seaweed at their base, as if they bore a double harvest; the townsfolk, the dwellers on the ruddy rocks of Ploumanac'h, the games in the harbour between two lines of waiting vehicles, the home-coming of father, always laden with presents after each journey, trinkets for Corentine and blessed medals for Marie-Anne, all these memory-pictures came to life once more, mirrored in the sunny mist of a

Breton summer. She heard again the clear laughter of bands of little girls arm-in-arm, barring the way across the jetty; while the old folks wondered what made the children so gay, and joined in without understanding. Alas! they laughed for the sheer joy of living, and to know that they were beautiful even in the lustreless, sunken eyes of age! Corentine Guen laughed loudest and longest of all.

She looked again at Simone, and as quickly turned away. "Fair-haired," she murmured, "almost too fair to be a Bretonne. And my hair waved so tightly that they thought I crimped it. Simone is very, very handsome, . . . but in quite a different style. . . . She is dark . . . and not a bit vain . . . but I was. They were too fond of telling me how pretty I was. . . . Father spoiled me. Some nights I fancied even the waves in the harbour were singing, *Jolie, jolie, La Corentine, jolie, jolie!*"

Yes, her father had spoiled her. He was proud of taking her out, for no other girl in Perros or Lannion had such a white skin, such a slender neck, and such eyes, tender or roguish by turns! She did not care for hard work; that was left to Marie-Anne, the

younger daughter. Corentine preferred sewing, ironing, embroidering, or visiting friends less good-looking than herself. Hers was the true temperament of a Lannionaise, always in search of amusement. She adored dancing. When the season of "Pardons" came round at La Clarté, or even Pleumeur, Trébeurden, and Locquivy, she would dream about them for weeks before, and beg to be allowed to go. Father and daughter would start off together, he in his blue sailor's suit, with silk buttons stamped with an anchor, and she in a light-coloured dress and long, pale grey scarf with silken fringe, wearing the gala head-dress, which suited her so perfectly. Her golden hair hung in two plaited loops beneath the muslin cap of the country, which is shaped like a white shell and touches the shoulders of the wearer. They were almost the last to come back at nightfall. Father would scold a little, and Corentine would beg to stay on. She came away from the ball tired out, intoxicated with compliments, admiration, and consciousness of the jealousy she had aroused. She drove home lulled into a delicious languor by the movement of the vehicle, while the Captain sat on the box as straight as on parade, driving

through the night air. When they reached home, Marie-Anne, who never went with her sister to the "Pardons," would come down in her petticoat at the first knock, half frightened, and blinking with sleepy eyes. A whiff of air would blow in, scattering the ashes on the hearth.

On one such night Corentine Guen's fate was decided. She could not miss the Fête of Lannion, which lasted two days in each year, the last Sunday and Monday in August. On the Sunday night there is a real ball beneath the elm trees of Guer, with seats in tiers above a gravel path, Venetian lanterns and coloured lights, strung in festoons from the trees, an orchestra playing, and the ordinary uninvited public kept out by a wooden barrier. . . . The branches are golden in the lamplight, the ships are full-dressed with flags. All the country-side has assembled: châtelaines and their husbands from old estates hidden away among fields of buckwheat, naval officers in uniform, crowds of officials in gold-braided coats (for men from the dockyard staff frequently take wives from places like Lannion), townsfolk, young girls from all the neighbouring cliff villages, wild to dance and show off their

fine clothes, seeking husbands or displaying their betrothal jewellery. . . .

At the Fête of Lannion you see the gala head-dress in perfection, its two peaked wings waving above the pretty slim necks of the Breton maidens, like flowers on their stems. There you will see the famous long gold earrings, the silk apron, and the special Lannion walk, the head held well back, while the fringed shawl waves to and fro on its wearer. Corentine Guen was foremost amongst them, prettiest and most admired by all. She was sixteen, and had never felt so happy or so self-satisfied. It was just at this moment, when a hundred or so of young men were about to choose their partners, that a man came up and asked her to dance.

He did not belong to the dockyard staff, but looked like a gentleman; he was young, tall, and quiet-looking, with a square, black beard. At the first glance she saw that he had come especially for her. As he drew near, he looked at her with almost devout admiration, as if she were a statuette of some saint. She began to feel shy before he spoke.

"Mademoiselle Corentine Guen, I believe?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"I have no one to introduce me, but our families are acquainted. I am Guillaume l'Héréec, of Tréguier."

Without another word he held out his arm. She took it, but could not think of anything to say; she felt strangely agitated, almost frightened. He talked a little as they danced, but only of commonplace things, as he would have talked to any other girl. He was very careful not to crush the grey dress and embroidered coif, and barely touched his partner, as if she were some fragile, precious thing. But she could read his thoughts. They were Bretons, and silence and reserve seemed natural to both. She would have liked not to dance again all the evening, after he had taken her back to her seat.

He came up to invite her again, and she could not summon up a smile. The boldest thing he could find to say was, "I saw you at the last 'Pardon' at Pleumeur, and I dared not venture to ask you to dance." She felt agitated at these awkwardly cold words, which hid depths of passion.

Madame l'Héréec rarely allowed her memory to carry her beyond this episode. In olden days her complacent vanity

had kept her in overflowing spirits. Now, wounded self-love refused to remember the sad years which had elapsed since. She constrained herself to forget them. She preferred thinking of childhood, and remembering herself as pretty little Corentine, for whom everyone had a smile in the streets of Perros and Lannion, and life was all happiness. Madame l'Héréec seemed to have lost her will-power, or perhaps some association from the past had powerfully awakened her ever youthful imagination, for she allowed her thoughts to roam uncontrolled. Once more she recalled the Fête of Lannion, Guillaume l'Héréec's declaration of love, and the violent opposition from his mother "Madame Jeanne," a cold and obstinate Bretonne from Tréguier.

Certainly if Madame Jeanne could have stopped the marriage it would never have taken place. She opposed her son bitterly, and said all she could against it. She reminded him of the disparity of fortune (for the l'Héréecs came of a wealthy old bourgeois family), of the young girl's coquetry, and of the reputation for frivolity and flightiness ascribed to all the women of Lannion. She hated Lannion with

the blind, narrow aversion of the peasant who lives a few miles away. All her own forbears had been baptized and married in the dark old cathedral of Tréguier, and slept their last sleep beneath its shadow. The honour of their ancient name, their prosperity and reputation for commercial honesty had slowly grown up on the rocky soil along the deep banks of the Jaudy. And now she would have to leave the cradle of her race, to look for the last time at the Hastings Tower, whence curfew tolled over the sleepy town at night, transplant herself at over fifty years of age, and follow the caprice of a little chit who had fascinated the heart, the weak heart, of her Guillaume! The great grievance against Corentine was that she insisted on her husband living in Lannion. She had declared that she would die of dulness in the gloomy town of Tréguier, and had sneered freely at the narrow, depressing life of its inhabitants. Guillaume gave way to her, in spite of every one else, because he could not resist his fiancée's pleading blue eyes. He sold the oil-mill which had founded the fortunes of the family, and bought another one, more modern and farther from the sea, close

to Lannion. The dreamy, timid Breton, hitherto so submissive to his mother, became obdurate and almost harsh when it came to the departure which Madame Jeanne had so much dreaded. But his mother had her revenge. Little Corentine soon showed herself frivolous and extravagant. With her good looks it was impossible to refuse to take her into Breton society, always ready to welcome anyone connected with the l'Héréec family. Invitations flowed in, and brought about triumphs for the young wife, and malicious gossip from the narrow little bourgeois circle which incessantly chattered and prattled of her doings. Sometimes they said she was too clever; at others, too fond of a joke. Poor sixteen-year-old bride! She little knew what her love of dancing was to cost her, nor how dearly she would have to pay for dining with rich townspeople in the neighbourhood, and at small country manor-houses where Guillaume would take her in grandfather Jobic's freshly-painted cabriolet.

When husband and wife stayed away from home for a day or two, Madame Jeanne, who had been accustomed to business from her childhood, took command of

the factory, and replaced her son as much of necessity as out of love of power. She was mistress over the house in the Rue du Pavé Neuf, since it had been bought with the savings of her widowhood. Guillaume would find her out of humour on his return. She pointed out that they were living too extravagantly, that their friends were above their position, and, besides leading them to spend above their means, caused them to neglect business. She told him the spiteful gossip that she picked up among the special set of old people over which she herself presided. She honestly tried to find out whether the *risqué* remarks and the generally careless behaviour of her daughter-in-law could be explained away for the sake of her son, whom she loved with all the passion which had filled her widowed heart since the death of Monsieur Jobic. Guillaume, still the lover, made excuses for Corentine, and declared that she was slandered; yet, in spite of himself, he could not quite shake off even the reports he did not believe in. He went on living in the same style to please Corentine. Madame Jeanne called it a dissipated life; it was no worse than frivolous and expensive,

but the jealous and distrustful Bretonne, swift to suspect but slow to denounce, was on the alert. The birth of the child might have put things right, and Guillaume hoped it would. But when his wife, in the pride of her young motherhood, tried to take her proper place in the household, she found herself opposed by Madame Jeanne. They disagreed on every possible subject. Madame Corentine's lightest wishes were set aside by Madame Jeanne, her orders contradicted, and her requests disregarded or misunderstood. The name of Simone, unusual in Brittany, the choice of a wet nurse, whom one wished to import from Lannion and the other insisted on hiring from Tréguier, all these were causes of dispute, and when Madame Corentine declared that she intended to *tutoyer* her daughter, a custom unknown in the l'Héréec family, violent scenes would take place, with reproaches and insulting references to the humble position of the Guens.

By this time the young wife was getting so uncomfortable in the house at Lannion, strictly watched and unfairly blamed for the most innocent things, that she left her husband no peace until he promised to go back

to the worldly life of their first year of marriage. But the seed of discord sown between Guillaume and Corentine was rising and spreading. Harassed by his mother about *la Lannionaise,* sick of being the helpless witness of perpetual quarrels, Guillaume gradually discovered his wife's faults for himself. He saw that she was vain as a spoilt child, and that her empty little head was only occupied with the admiration of strangers. He chafed at knowing what the old inhabitants of Lannion thought of her. Business began to go badly, debts cropped up, and undermined the revenues of the l'Héréec family. They were not really rich, except as compared with the poverty in the neighbouring parts of the country. He, in his turn, reproached his wife bitterly and furiously, as if his long patience had broken bounds at last, and became as obstinate and narrow-minded as his mother.

In the silent room in King Street Madame Corentine lived over again these scenes of the past. She watched the slow disintegration of love, through the ever-recurring discussions, the fury of her husband and his shameful treatment of her before even the servants and the child, until one night he

insulted and struck her, pushing her against a piece of furniture and almost knocking her down after a dinner party at the de Couedans', where she had behaved improperly, according to the ideas of a "Tréguier man married to an unsatisfactory wife from Lannion."

The brute! All the horror of years gone by passed before her, the end of all things, the flight, the scandal and gossip of the whole country-side, the legal dispute for the possession of the child, even Perros becoming uninhabitable, and Jersey, a last refuge where she could hide Simone and keep her.

Her face flushed crimson, and her heart beat with rage till the work-frame shook in her little hands which grasped it tightly. Madame Corentine had not been so agitated for a very long time. Her anger was still as hot as ever; she was still her old self, and she felt furious words ready to burst from her lips at the thought of the husband who was brutal to his wife, and weak in his mother's hands! The agitation she had fallen into warned Madame Corentine that she must stop and calm herself. She leaned back sighing, and passed her hand across her eyes, wondering what she could fix her

thoughts on so as to distract her mind. Suddenly she remembered the letter which she had received on coming home that afternoon. She took the crumpled envelope, and opened it slowly, so as to give the new train of thought time to work and amuse her. The letter came, as she expected, from her father.

"Perros, July 24th.

"My dear Daughter,

"All is well at Perros, except that old Mother Gode Téec, who begged her bread, will want no more, as she is dead. The farmers are pleased with their corn, and the buckwheat is coming on well. As I passed by Le Hédron I saw a piece of ground where there is stuff for many a dozen galettes[1] in the year. You know that these things don't interest me much, but I am pleased for the sake of the neighbours whose money is in their land.

"I haven't had any good hauls of fish lately. I think the coast just here is empty; one must go as far as Les Iles to find anything, and even then you can't always be sure of getting fish. I have to put more can-

[1] Translator's note. A *galette* is a large slab of glazed pastry similar to our flaky pie-crust.

vas out, and my boat is as old as myself. I must tell you, my dear daughter, that I was upset once, crossing to the Ile Rougie, since yours to hand of the 30th June, but neither I nor the boat came to any harm. Some men from Ploumanac'h picked us both up, under the half-hour. You need not worry, it is not my turn yet, as you see. I must also tell you that Marie-Anne will be confined in a few days. She cannot get about any longer. Her husband is at sea, and she would very much like to have you with her at her time; in fact, she wants you to be godmother. I know you will want to think over this. She doesn't like to write and ask you herself, so I offered to do so. The poor child frets so at not having seen you for the last ten years.

"Kiss the young lady for me (after all she is my granddaughter), and,

"Believe me,

"Your devoted father,

"Captain Guen."

Madame Corentine read the latter part of the letter twice, and whispered the word "Godmother" to herself, over and over again. She had not expected the suggestion,

which was rather disturbing. She read between the lines of old Guen's stiff and cold letter, and understood the emotion he must have felt as he wrote. She could hear the conversation he must have had with Marie-Anne. She pictured her, timid and frightened at the approaching ordeal, and longing to have beside her the sister whom she had "not seen for ten years." He said nothing of himself. Poor father! He had not seen his daughter either for ten years, except once in a flying visit to Jersey; she had always refused firmly to set foot on Breton soil.

"Godmother," repeated the young woman, crumpling the unfolded sheet. "It's impossible. I could never go near Perros again!"

The intense irritation of her recent mood kept coming over her in waves. *"No, no, no, no!"* she repeated to herself. She would never go back to the place where she had suffered so much, and from whence she had been driven by spite and the basest envy. Phrases of her father's letter, which she still held tightly, rang in her ears like a recurring song. "Marie-Anne is expecting a child . . . her husband is at sea . . . She wants you . . ." Corentine felt the idea working

in the depths of her woman's nature, in spite of her wounded pride and the refusal on her lips. What an evening of misery! She rose, in order to put an end to the interior conflict.

It was time for bed. Simone was sleeping in the next room, her clasped hands showed long and white against the wall. The silence outside was so intense that the mother could hear her child's deep, regular breathing. She shuddered suddenly, with a sort of intuitive vision of their terrible dilemma. The sleeping girl had opened up a fresh problem that afternoon. She was evidently thinking more of her father than she had been willing to admit, and perhaps longed to see him. The long separation had caused some ideal of a father to grow up in the virginal heart, and she was hiding her adoration as other girls might conceal love for a possible husband. Was it not dangerous to allow this to go on, and to keep up the constraint which fostered these secret rosy visions of home and relations? Ought they not bravely to face the danger and accept Guen's invitation? What was Corentine to answer, if one day Simone declared her duty was to go to her father and neglect him no longer? What

power would the mother have to fix the length of her absence, if the girl did go? Maternal authority would be weakened to start with, because Simone would have dispensed with her mother's consent, and between them there would have been a long and bitter struggle before such a state of things could come to pass! And if the father received his daughter kindly, as Corentine was sure he would, the girl, flattered and petted in her new home, would certainly resent having been kept away so long. She would accuse her mother (and in her heart refuse to forgive her) for having deprived her of such legitimate happiness. When she came back to Jersey she would be utterly changed, a daughter who would question her mother closely, and blame her long jealousy. . . .

Perhaps some immediate change, such as the journey to Brittany, might avert all this. Yes, she would spend a week at Perros and send Simone for two or three days to Lannion. . . . Madame l'Héréec could surely set limits to a favour which had not even been asked. She would bring her daughter back on a fixed date. The generosity would be all on the maternal side, and

Simone would feel bound in honour to keep her word to the mother who had let her go. The false position which they were now in would be altered. It would be clearly seen that Madame l'Héréec had nothing to fear, and was not vindictive, since she sent the daughter to the father of her own accord.

But pride and vindictiveness were even then rending her troubled soul. Madame Corentine felt the ground tremble under her feet at the mere idea of going to Brittany. Was not she herself bringing about the parting she had dreaded so long? She to send her daughter among her enemies! The father was bad enough, but Madame Jeanne literally loathed her! She must be mad to let herself be upset by a letter from old Guen, and a child's caprice. Yes, mad, mad, mad! She repeated the word in the deathly silence; her soul seemed empty of all but conflicting feelings. Who would deliver, advise, save her? She went to the window and pressed her forehead against the damp, cloudy panes, behind which the east wind was driving the fog higher and higher. Oh, the sadness of an empty, gloomy street at night, when not one soul seems awake in the shuttered houses!

All are sleeping, not a creature passes along the road, not one solitary star looks down upon the lonely forsaken woman who is fighting with her own conscience. . . .

At last Madame l'Héréec crossed the room and went to Simone's bedside. Feverishly she gathered up two long locks of dark hair straying over the pillow, and, leaning down, kissed them passionately. Then she stood looking long and fixedly at her sleeping child, who had written to her absent father away in France.

CHAPTER II

Next morning, when Simone entered her mother's room, she found her asleep, worn out with her long, tearful vigil. The daughter crept in on tip-toe, and wakened her mother with a silent kiss and embrace; knowing, with the loving intuition of a growing girl, that it is better to heal wounds with caresses than with arguments or explanations. As she went back into her bedroom, rejoicing that they were fast friends again, she gave one glance from under her long eyelashes at the work-frame. The pen-stroke marked in Indian ink had gone no farther.

Madame l'Héréec guessed what was in her daughter's mind.

"My eyes were too tired to go on last night," she remarked.

A little later they went down into the shop, which the servant had just opened and swept. It was a very fine day, and the goods displayed in the window of *La Lande Fleurie* looked quite pretty in the dazzling

morning sunshine. Points of light glanced off, in all the colours of the rainbow, from quantities of little polished objects: Rhine stones, brooches, bracelets, hat-pins, enamels, ivory and feather fans. The sun illuminated the edges of great Indian shells, it shone on ptarmigan's claws mounted on penholders and paper-knives, it sent streaks of coppery radiance down the polished cabbage-sticks stacked in a corner, set an aureole round Japanese plates, and glittered on glass vases containing piled up heaps of tobacco, sold untaxed on free English territory. "Virginian," "Old Judge," "Army and Navy Mixture," "Richmond Gem," and "Orient" gave an Eastern fragrance to the atmosphere of the shop. Simone liked all the pretty shining wares, and she loved a fine day. She came down as if she were entering a ball-room, her bright eyes taking everything in; feeling that she and the sunshine were made for each other.

Madame Corentine seemed uncomfortably dazzled by the glare. She sat down at a desk in the middle of the room, and buried herself in accounts, while her daughter arranged a show-case containing jewellery made of Jersey spar and enamelled coins of

the country. Simone's fingers lightly rearranged the window where the stock had been disturbed in serving customers the day before, setting a blue or pink stone here and there in a more advantageous position, or flicking away a speck of dust. She liked such dainty work and did it well. As a rule her mind remained inactive, her thoughts not going much farther than her hands. She was so young, in every sense, that the sunshine was enough to make her happy. Now she was thinking of her father, who perhaps at this very hour was reading her name on the slip of paper. She felt a little thrill of anxiety as to how he would receive it. In her mind's eye she distinctly saw the garden, and the room where probably M. l'Héréec and the severe Madame Jeanne were sitting. . . . Suddenly the bell would ring and old Gote would open the door. After that she could picture nothing distinctly, not even her father's face. Five years' absence had dimmed his features and the expression of his eyes, and she could not even recall the sound of his voice. It was as if death had come between them, dropping veil after veil over the past, as the years went by. She did not possess even a picture to remind her

of what was once so dear. Everything to do with the absent father had been banished from the new home, except a faded photograph taken a few weeks after marriage, of which she had caught a glimpse one day, when Madame l'Héréec was turning over packets of folded letters.

She paused in her work to look at her mother.

Madame Corentine was thinking deeply, with eyes gazing vaguely and sadly out into the street, and chin propped on one hand. How a few written words had changed everything in one night!

Simone returned to her occupation. From time to time she glanced towards the desk from which proceeded no sound but the scratching of pen on paper. No movement of a lifted arm cast any shadow on the shining parquet floor. The downcast face preserved its thoughtful expression. Evidently Madame Corentine was preoccupied with more than even her old sorrows.

After lunch she announced her intention of calling on Miss Helen Crawford, an old maid in very reduced circumstances, who gave herself out as a governess. No one, however, had ever seen a pupil of hers, but

she did not seem to feel anything derogatory in rendering people many little services in exchange for compensation; thus avoiding taking some regularly paid but much lower employment. Miss Helen would look after a cottage, engage a cook, or nurse geraniums and fuchsias, left behind by visitors or travellers, in her little garden in the Springfield Road. Simone, alone in the shop, wondered what her mother could possibly wish to confide to Miss Crawford. Her curiosity was not satisfied for over an hour. She had time to sell half-a-dozen cabbage sticks, oxydized silver brooches, and views of Jersey, before her mother came back, when the shop was once more empty, and no one looking at the window.

"Simone," she said, "I have just arranged with Miss Helen to take care of the house for a time. I am thinking of going away."

"With me?"

"Yes. Marie-Anne very much wants me to be godmother to her baby. I've been thinking over it, and I've accepted."

"Oh, Mama!" and the young girl crossed the shop, all joyful surprise, to where Madame Corentine was standing by the inner door, taking off her hat.

"Are we going to Perros?" she said.

"Certainly."

"To stay with Grandfather Guen?"

"And at Lannion too, if you wish."

Simone was beginning her thanks, but as she put her arms round her mother's neck she found herself gently but unmistakably repulsed.

"Don't, child, don't. We aren't going just this minute, in any case. Miss Helen will be too busy to come for another three or four days."

The girl recoiled. She saw that her mother was crying; and her happiness received a sudden check. She was cut to the heart; and once more the two women felt a pang; with all their love for each other, they could not agree.

But the next moment they both re-entered the shop, and Madame Corentine asked Simone to go and fetch some papers from upstairs. The girl ran up, and, as she went, could not repress a growing feeling of joy. She had to pass a landing window through which could be seen, over the neighbouring roofs, the far end of the jetty and a wide expanse of sea. Simone stopped and looked longingly at the blue line in the distance,

the limit of her hopes. Then, as no one was by to see, she blew a kiss towards the invisible coast of France.

When she came down she went into her bedroom for no particular reason, but it looked even prettier than ever. Words and thoughts of all kinds seemed whirling in her head like butterflies in spring: Perros, Trestrao, Marie-Anne, Lannion, Guen, Sullian . . . . father! She smiled at them all.

CHAPTER III

No sooner had Madame Corentine decided on the expedition to Lannion than she regretted it. When she went on board the little English steamer plying between Jersey and St. Malo, four days after the interview with Miss Crawford, she was pale and nervous, and too preoccupied with her own sad thoughts to notice anything going on around her. She established herself on a deck-chair in the stern of the ship, wrapped her head in a shawl and dismissed Simone on pretext of sea-sickness.

"Leave me now," she said, "I shall keep my eyes shut till we reach St. Malo."

Then she let her thoughts return to a possible separation from her child, and went over everything which had passed between them during the last walk. Sudden panics assailed her. She feared her daughter would be literally stolen from her. With an instinctive gesture of self-defence, her hand touched the nickel-fitted bag beside her, containing the charter of her freedom, the deed

whose every word was engraven on her memory indelibly. . . . . "In the name of the Republic, &c. . . . . separation between the said l'Héréec and his wife . . . . the plaintiff to have sole charge of the child, whom she undertakes to send to the husband for the month of September . . . ." Would they dare drag her daughter from her after that? No, he had pledged his word. Law and justice were on her side, and she would invoke both if necessary. She repeated all this to herself, and yet kept entangling her mind in those confused memories, apprehensions, and contradictions which do not help to undo harm, and only weaken mental energy.

Simone at first refused to leave her, but, as Madame l'Héréec was lying quietly on her chair, she concluded her mother was dozing, and went up on to the bridge, where she found the lieutenant, an Irishman known to them both. The ship carried few passengers. Simone leaned her elbows on the iron rail, and let the wind blow her hair about her face. During the two hours' crossing, while the vessel cut through the choppy waves, she showed all a child's curiosity in questions about the route and the general

handling of the vessel, asking which tides might run the ship aground, and whereabouts beacons were. The lieutenant told her sea-stories, smiling behind his fair beard at the girl's remarks, pointing out rocks above the water, and frothy clusters of foam which indicated where others lay below. Presently Cézembre, round as the setting of a ring, became visible. The French coast, at first a mere line, broke into irregularities, took on definite colour, and rose well above the horizon. The steeple of St. Malo soared into the blue sky as they came to the mouth of the Rance, a wide, splendid estuary with rocky golden banks shutting in the blue waters, against a distant background of forests. It recalled the Norwegian fjords. Simone was enthusiastic in her admiration as she went down the companion-way. She was surprised to see her mother standing up, smiling behind her long tortoiseshell eyeglasses.

"Isn't Brittany lovely!" cried the girl.

"Beautiful," returned the mother, less enthusiastically, and with a gravity which Simone could not fail to notice. "It makes one feel funny to be in France again, somehow, doesn't it, Simonette?"

And she patted Simone's cheek with her gloved fingers.

They took the train at once, but stopped at Plouaret. It was not until ten o'clock next morning that a hired fly was sent for, to take them on to Perros by way of Lannion. Corentine would not risk meeting her husband, and tried to avoid even the sight of the massive house in the Rue du Pavé-Neuf, which stood out between double gardens, its brown shutters and long, zinc-edged roof visible from the opposite cliffs above the elm trees of Guer.

They drove across country by a road which wound past farmhouses. It was a typical Breton morning, the air soft and damp, and the sky overcast. The mist, carrying aromas of grass and thatch, still filled the valleys, and hung like smoke among low bushes, while the sun was already hot on the pine-crowned ridges above. Larks, so numerous on that coast, flew up towards the sea. Noon would bring a short spell of glorious sunshine.

At first Madame Corentine sat beside her daughter in silence, constantly glancing in the direction of the heights which shut out Lannion, her eyes bright at the thought of

possible danger, and her haughty little head showing defiance and rebellion in every movement. Then the momentary excitement died down, and her blue eyes began to take in the familiar objects on the way. As she drove past spots so familiar to her in childhood, girlhood, and early bridal days, a peaceful, half-smiling expression crept into her face. When at last the blue hills of Lannion were plainly to be seen, and the horses, trotting quickly in the sea air, were rapidly approaching Perros, she had forgotten her resentment, for the time at any rate. Madame Corentine began to answer her daughter's questions, named the churches visible here and there, and leaned out whenever Simone tried to read the numbers on the mile-stones. The glamour of home-coming was working now; and mother and child were at one in their happy anticipations. On the hills the pine-trees were sighing in the wind and waving their plumy crests. The sea began to show through the narrow valleys, each with its brook full of mint plants and its little farm tucked away among the trees. Fresh breezes blew towards them and the waves sparkled in the gap between the cliffs. They were nearing Perros.

CHAPTER IV

"Catch hold of the hawser, my girl!"

Captain Guen, who was sculling around Perros jetty, threw a coil of rope on to the high granite dyke covered with sea-weed, which looked like some old ivy-crowned wall. Marie-Anne bent slowly, and fastened the rope to the highest rung of an iron ladder. The coastguard on duty stood looking on.

"Have you had a good haul, father?"

Guen, without answering, began shipping his oars. In the bottom of the boat he put the boat-hook and the pine-wood pole which he used as bowsprit. The noise of the wooden objects falling against each other echoed over the waters of the little bay, and the sound was a delight to the Captain, calling attention, as it did, to the important fact of his landing. He was in no hurry, and seaside visitors came up to try and buy some of his fish.

"You must have plenty as you don't answer," pursued the young wife.

The Captain went on with his prepara-

tions. He put away his tarpaulin cover, slipped on the worn coat with brass buttons, which he considered dignified, and, seizing one of the sides of the ladder, he went up, carrying in his other hand a basket dripping with scaly salt water.

"There!" he said, when he stood on the jetty: "ten dory, two rock-fish, and one small conger eel!"

"How much are your dory, my man?" asked a male voice from a group of by-standers.

"My fish are not for sale," answered the Captain. He drew himself up when he saw the "gallos," or strangers, whom he did not particularly care for; and, as he was very tall, he looked right over their heads at some object in the distance. It was his habit, immediately on landing, to go and see that all was in order at home. It was always a joy to him to look at his house. It stood slightly back from the others in the row; the door was sheltered by a wind screen, but the two windows overlooking the bay were open till nightfall to the sea breezes. Captain Guen did not look at all like the usual fish-trading sailor. His slight sunburnt throat supported a bird-like head, shaped somewhat like a

gull's, and, like those of many sailors, his large clear eyes were of the mingled blue and green of transparent water.

When he had satisfied himself that nothing required his presence in Lower Perros, he called to his daughter to take up the basket, the coastguard touched his cap, and Guen walked quickly towards the town. When they had reached the place where the jetty curves round to the harbour, he looked back at the stranger who had wasted his time, and shrugged his shoulders. His voice was gentler, and a kind of smile puckered his weather-beaten cheeks.

"Well, Marie-Anne!" he said, "a good haul, wasn't it?"

"Yes, father."

"And I only went as far as La Noire de Thomé. I was thinking of other things all the time and wondering if any one had arrived. No one has, I suppose?"

"No, no one," answered Marie-Anne, shifting the basket from one hand to the other.

"And no letters either?"

"No."

"Well, they'll come to-morrow. What a pity Sullian isn't here; he's so fond of rock-

fish soup. You must take them to the Tudys, they're poor and will be glad of them."

"Yes, father."

They walked along the quay where several well-known characters of the place, old sailors who had given up going to sea, were lounging about on coils of rope and exchanged grumbling salutations with the still active Captain Guen. They mumbled a kind of good-day, and nodded indifferently, as if saluting passing ships.

Guen turned to the right and entered the tiny *cul-de-sac* forming a miniature courtyard in front of his house; he passed under the slate-covered penthouse which in stormy weather rattled like a pair of castanets, and opened his door.

No letters! He was growing uneasy. Why had neither Corentine nor Sullian written? He sat down in his usual attitude, astride of a chair, in front of the small fire where his supper was cooking, and lit his pipe.

"I'm going out, father," said Marie-Anne, "I'm going to the Tudys."

When the door had closed behind her, the long smoke-blackened room was once more

in semi-darkness. One very small barred window on the right of the door was the only source of light. Twilight was never long coming to the low-roofed chamber, which was the Captain's fish-larder and kitchen combined. All it contained were a table and chairs, some nets and lines rolled up on their cork spools, a pair of sculls on the wall, and a new sail in one corner. A bed had been put up at one end for the Captain, in case the Jersey travellers came, and his room was ready for them to occupy. But they had given no sign!

Still, there was no cause for anxiety. He knew Corentine was careless about letters and appointments, and quite capable of arriving without any warning. Captain Guen had no illusions about his daughter, in spite of his absorbing love for her; but the mere idea that she might really come back, and stay in her old home, made his heart leap. She had always been his favourite, as everyone knew; he thought her more beautiful each time he came back from sea. It had been his pride to give her a much bigger dowry than most girls in her rank of life could expect, and he knew that her twenty thousand francs might very easily have at-

tracted a merchant captain or Government official, or some man in a position Captain Guen himself would have liked to fill. But his elder daughter had soon become his chief worry. Not that he had held her responsible for the turn events had taken. He had made all possible excuses. "Wait a bit, time will work wonders," he kept on saying, and when she was literally turned out of Lannion, repudiated and driven back to take shelter in her old home during the trial, he met the flood of scandal and abuse which followed her with the one remark that: "Corentine had not been understood; she had been too harshly treated." He had no very clear ideas on the matter, having refused to listen to all the reports of his daughter's extravagance, her flirtations and her bad temper. He felt his personal dignity attacked; and suffered, as if under some unjust blow of fortune, when Madame Corentine, finding life as a separated wife equally impossible in Perros or Lannion, finally fled to Jersey. Ever since then, he had taken no interest in anything but his fishing. He spent whole days, and often part of the night, in his sailing boat, always alone in all weathers. His seafaring

cronies, who had long since retired, watched him still going to sea, though he was well off and could afford to buy all the fish he wanted, and would say to themselves: "He misses Corentine. The man can't shake off his troubles." And they were right. His little house in the harbour constantly tempted him to sea. He could see everything from his windows; no gust of wind passed unnoticed, he watched every yacht sailing towards the jetty, and everything that flew or skimmed the waters delighted his eyes, down to the coveys of tiny snipe which passed from shore to shore like bubbles of foam driven before the wind. Sometimes, when he had a fit of rheumatism, he would look out of the window for hours at a time, watching the clear-cut curve of the horizon, and fancying himself sailing towards it. Far, far into infinite space he would sail, in command of some intrepid little craft, *L'Armida* or *Le Légué*, a mere speck on the waters, obedient to his guidance.

He thought of all the distant ports where he had landed to repair damages or take in more cargo, the ships he had passed, and his successful contracts with naval engineers.

He recalled nights spent in his boat, in a ground-swell, the top-sail wailing plaintively, and the breeze whispering round the pine-wood masts, like two singers answering each other in a duet. It was many a long year ago now since he had lost his heart to the sea. He had pledged himself to his mighty mistress, from the days when, a little barefooted cabin-boy, he had run about in the mud at low tide on the beach at Guer, catching crabs and eels under the very keels of schooners lying alongside the wharf. He remembered their wild and stormy amours, which had lasted for forty years of fair and foul weather, and his unspeakable yearning for blue water when anything kept him on land against his will. The night-wind would call to him, and every wave had a beckoning sparkle on its crest, as it rolled back into the surf.

In his veins ran the blood of those adventurous navigators who, centuries ago, would put out to sea in search of unknown islands. He was like the sea-birds who not only seek their food in the ocean, but love to skim and circle over the waters before they try their wings in distant flights. Now all his innocent pleasure in living by the harbour

was spoilt by his separation from his elder daughter. Even when he was watching his beloved sea and remembering happy days, he could not quite forget his troubles. There were some slanders and speeches he could never banish from his mind, such as Madame Jeanne's words at the trial. "I knew from the beginning," she had said, "that my son would regret marrying beneath him. I warned him."

"Married beneath him!" Who in all Brittany had the right to use such an expression in connection with a daughter of Captain Guen? Who could accuse his family of anything dishonourable or fraudulent, and where could you find better blood? Indeed his extraction was better perhaps than people guessed, for there were old traditions about the Guens. The Captain never boasted, but he had heard all about them. There was a story that his ancestors were kinsmen of the Armorican missionary, Saint Guenolé, and, as a little child, he had been rocked to sleep under his grandmother's shawl to the sound of old, old tales told in cautious whispers. Captain Guen knew the history of the Saint, an earl's son, whose name meant "white as snow." A white, in-

nocent soul, truly, protected early by monastic discipline under the wing of St. Corentin, who would visit the cliffs of Brittany from time to time. St. Guenolé was strict and severe only towards himself; his heart melted at the songs of the city of Ys, and he wept before King Grallon at its threatened destruction. He was a lover of solitude, and would have roamed the earth over in the service of God. Many were the youths in rough pagan times, sons of coarse peasant fathers and gentle holy mothers, who handed on the traditions of these two saints, imbibing from the one the love of long adventurous journeys by sea, and from the other that instinctive purity which leads to the vows of religion. Followers of the latter would be seen after great catastrophes, battle, pest, or pillage, which had left desolate hearths and trampled harvests, pale from fasting, but with shining faces. In sudden mourning, family feuds, and deaths of the first-born, they were sent for in all haste. They came, bringing consolation, sometimes restoring the dead to their desolate parents. Then they would disappear once more, to avoid the praises and thanks of the outer world. They would re-enter

their monasteries, standing among miles of cliff-land and facing the infinite ocean. Sometimes they would take a barley-cake, and with psalter and bell, set out to sea in search of islands where they could be farther away from men and nearer to God. Their hearts would melt with joy at the soft murmur of the waves, and the instinct of their race revived within them as they sailed safely above the hidden rocks.

Guen, with a picked crew from Perros and Lannion, had many a time rounded the Breton peninsula and passed the Race of Sein. He always looked longingly, a prayer in his heart, towards the flat island where the waves always seemed to scoop the sea into a trough. On fine days, when the fisher-folk made fires of seaweed in their fields, and thin spirals of smoke rose towards the pale sky, Guen would say to himself that his ancestors had done the like. The disciple of St. Corentin had sowed barley over the rocky soil, while his hymns mingled with the swell of the ocean and the cry of the birds. It was from thence that, having no ship, and wishing to reach the mainland, the Saint and his companions walked upon the water, in their white garments, like a flight of sea-mews

following the crest of the waves. Guen was never tired of watching the place, and picturing the narrowest part of the Race they could have crossed. Perhaps he really was descended through some line of forgotten fisherman ancestors from the Count of Fragan who saw the town of Ys buried in the sea. The only clue to such a probability, the faintest shadow of resemblance to such a race, was in the personality of his second daughter, Marie-Anne, though she had remained a woman of the people. She still wore the national costume, and had the air and the housewifely proclivities of those who had been her schoolfellows. When her school-days were over she had not, like Corentine, asked for special lessons, she had never been fond of amusement nor bent on getting a husband. All the romance of her life was centred between Perros church and old Guen's house.

One day, towards her twentieth year, the captain of a merchantman bound for long foreign service had asked her to be his wife, and ever since her marriage her days had been divided between months of quiet waiting, with her heart and thoughts at sea, and brief reunions of a few weeks at a time. She

was just the ordinary wife of a sailor living in a town on the coast of Brittany.

But there was something about her which distinguished her from other women. Her face was full of some strange charm, with its meek violet eyes and their hardly perceptible fair lashes and brows. Two great folds of golden hair came down under her lace cap; her mouth was rather wide, and her shoulders sloping; above all, her skin was almost translucent, as if her pure soul was shining visibly through it, as in pictures of the saints. Those who saw her at prayer in Perros church were reminded of a figure on some antique fresco; she looked the embodiment of all the noblest memories of the past.

Whatever else the legend had done, it had certainly given Captain Guen a certain status in Perros-Guirec. He was born in Lannion, it is true, and had lived there till his marriage; but the barriers of even Breton prejudice may sometimes be shifted for a distance of a few miles, and Perros had adopted him as one of her sons. He was considered quite an authority on subjects connected with the sea. When a ship was overdue, the women of the place, and some-

times even the Syndic, would come and consult him.

"Captain," they would say, "the *Marie* ought to have arrived from Christiania last week, and she isn't signalled yet."

And he would always find reassuring explanations: delays at small ports, damages to be overhauled on one or other of the islands, or certain currents which would impede a ship in her course. It was only because he had not cared to stand for election that Guen was not a member of Perros Town Council.

Just at this time there were no news of *La Jeanne* of Lannion, the fine merchantman under the command of his son-in-law, and he was explaining the reason to himself with approving nods of the head. Suddenly he heard the clatter of shoes on the pavement of the courtyard. He listened intently, and distinguished Marie-Anne's heavy footfall, and several voices speaking in a low voice. What was it? Could it possibly be . . . .?

Guen got up and, putting down his pipe, opened the door.

"Father, it's Corentine!" said a voice, "Grandfather, it's Simone!" cried another,

—and before he could collect himself two arms were thrown round his neck, and he felt cool lips, the mould of a lifted veil, and the crush of satin ribbon pressing against his tanned cheek.

"How are you, father?"

He answered nothing, but pressed his daughter so hard against his heart that for a second she was lifted off her feet. Then he unloosed his grasp, and stepped back, screwing up his eyes as if watching the new rigging of a ship.

"Not a bit changed," he said. "Just the same. . . . . And now let's have a look at the other!" . . . .

Simone hung back, a little behind her mother, feeling rather awkward. The half-opened door let in a flood of light on the tall young girl; her rosy, English-looking face was half-serious and half-smiling in astonishment. The Captain looked her over from head to heel, taking in the black felt hat, the white travelling veil, and the dust-cloak, a totally unknown garment to him. He could not trace anything of the Guen family in her, and seemed quite out of countenance.

"Faith, I shouldn't have owned the child

if I'd met her in the street, Corentine," he remarked. . . . . "But she looks well, and how tall she's grown!"

"I should think so, since you saw me last! Aren't you going to kiss me, Grandfather?"

She came straight up to him and held up her face.

"You know it was I who insisted on coming, Grandfather," she remarked calmly.

"What are you talking about, Simone?"

"You can't deny it, Mama, and I was so grateful to you for consenting. Yes, Grandfather, I *am* pleased to be here. I feel so at home."

"That's hardly possible, child."

"But I am. I remember the two jolly engravings of brigs upstairs, too. . . . . Don't think of me as a 'young lady,' . . . . I can tell you I'm not one. To prove it I'll help Aunt Marie-Anne get dinner, if she'll let me."

She had already pulled out her hat-pin and hung her hat on an anchor fastened to one of the walls. The Captain followed her with his eyes, pleased in reality with her manner, but not quite decided in his mind about her.

"As you please," he said. "Poor Marie-

Anne is not up to much, and she'll be glad of a little help. You come upstairs with me, Corentine, and I'll show you where you are to sleep."

The Captain preceded his daughter up the wooden staircase, an old relic of Breton architecture, with twisted columns on the narrow landings.

"You must excuse Simone, father," whispered Corentine, "I've rather spoilt her. . . . . You know she has been so much alone with me. . . . ."

"Spoilt her, have you? Well, I don't know anything about that," said the old sailor out loud, "she hasn't said any harm that I can see. . . . . Of course she doesn't take after our side of the family, that's quite clear."

"Yes, I think . . . ."

"It's not the girl's fault, Corentine. . . . . Besides, he had his good qualities, too, when all's said and done. Perhaps nothing would have gone amiss if it hadn't been for Madame Jeanne."

The husband's name did not pass between them, but Madame Corentine seemed impatient at the mere thought of his living so near.

On the top landing were doors opening respectively into Marie-Anne's room and her father's. Corentine hurried into the latter.

"How nicely you've arranged it for us!" she said—which was quite true. Everything was shining with polish and soap, and the old walnut-wood bed with its trefoil carvings and embroidered sheets gave out a sweet breath of verbena. On the chimney-piece two pink-lipped Indian shells, filled with the tiny bell-like blossoms of white heather, stood on either side of a branch of coral under a glass shade. On the walls were the Captain's telescope, hanging from two nails, his framed commission, and coloured engravings of a brig and a schooner, formerly commanded by him, drawn with the greatest technical accuracy, sailing over a sea of neat green and blue waves painted in even stripes. Through the thick but dazzingly clean window, adorned outside with a pot of geraniums and a convolvulus fluttering in the wind round a string, could be seen the magnificent roadstead between the curves of the hills, where fisher folk plied their trade, and retired sea-captains enjoyed their leisure.

"This is better than Jersey, eh?" asked

Guen, noticing that his daughter was gazing out to sea with a rather wistful expression.

"Oh, yes!" she answered, coming out of her reverie and shaking the black tips in her hat—"much better."

"We only want Sullian now."

"Whereabouts is he?"

"At Bilboa, taking in cargo for the return journey. If you stay any time you will probably see him. We are expecting news; you may imagine how anxious he is to get back."

"He will want to kiss his baby. . . . . Poor Marie-Anne!"

Guen smiled. "It will be a boy. . . . . Fancy, if my son-in-law Sullian were here, we should be . . . ."

He was just going to say "a complete family party," but he remembered his other son-in-law, and was silent. Poor old Guen blushed; free and frank of speech, he was not accustomed to keep anything back.

Corentine affected not to understand. "We shall be most comfortable, father," she remarked; "now show me Marie-Anne's room."

A few hours later they were all dining in the low-roofed room, at the round table

which had never been used with a leaf. The four places were laid on a fine linen tablecloth, ironed by the best washerwoman in the place. Corentine sat opposite Guen, and Simone and Marie-Anne on either side. The party exchanged the happy glances and disjointed remarks which always pass between people who have not met for some time. They touched on all sorts of subjects, so as to take up the thread of the past and put each other thoroughly at ease. The Captain had the most to say. He told fishing stories, gave them local news, and grew rejuvenated in recalling the past. It was quite in his old manner that he turned to his elder daughter, calling her "petite Corentine" and praising their native Brittany. Corentine in her own way felt happy at home. After the constant strain of keeping up appearances, and the effort to appear different from her real self, it was an intense relief to be quite natural, and to feel that she was not being watched and gossipped over, as at Jersey, by those who knew nothing really of her inner life.

Sullian's name was often mentioned, and each time Marie-Anne smiled with an expression of infinite gravity and sweetness, which made her look more than ever like a

saint's statue in its niche, or one of the women of pure Celtic race to be found in obscure Breton villages.

But conversation never flagged between Simone and the Captain. The young girl was anxious to hear every detail about Perros, where she was a complete stranger, having only had brief glimpses of the place as a little child. Besides which, she perceived that she was rapidly attracting and fascinating her grandfather.

"We'll go and see the church to-morrow, grandfather, won't we?"

"Yes, my darling."

"And the beach at Trestrao?"

"Certainly."

"At the point below the Castle, where you were upset?"

"I should rather think so!"

"And then we'll go to Ploumanac'h where the waves come up over the lighthouse, and to Tregastel too. Grandfather, we must make Mama come with us to the 'Pardon' at La Clarté. It's soon, isn't it?"

"On the fifteenth of August."

"Oh, she'll come! Look, she's longing to say yes. . . . . She'll come, and in the baker's cart, too; I don't want any carriage,

I want to do exactly what Mama did when she was my age!"

That evening the Captain's house, shuttered close and tight to keep out the wind and curious eyes, was like some snug little island where a party of travellers have collected together to get away from the rest of the world. So far, nothing sad in their recollections of the past had had time to check the sudden ebullition of domestic happiness. Old Guen was beaming.

Late that night, when the others were all in bed, he carefully undid the door and slipped out, to stride up and down the jetty listening to the soothing sound of the waves. He recognized his boat in the darkness, and, for the first time for many a long day, did not plan to go fishing next morning. The happiness of reunion filled his heart and shut out everything else. He looked at the light in the travellers' window, and felt they were thinking the same. Marie-Anne was dreaming in her loneliness of foreign ports; trying to imagine towns unlike Perros, because her husband was away. She missed Sullian, and was only half alive without him. But tonight she felt calm and trustful, as if the joy all around her was lulling her to rest.

CHAPTER V

On August 14th the bells of La Clarté had rung to announce the "Pardon" of the next day. They sent out peal after peal from the granite belfry, which soars to the sky from the rocky incline between Perros beach and the hills. A few persons, mostly young, had already assembled in the bare little village for *Le Feu de l'Assomption.* The priest, following the ancient custom, came in procession to bless and set fire to the bonfire of faggots and brushwood piled up a little farther down at the foot of a Calvary. Those at sea or on land could see the flames for miles round. Lines of sparks floated in the sky long after the fire was extinguished, trailing in and out among the stars; and Madame Corentine, standing dumb behind the others on the cliff at Perros, remembered the young men leaping over the flaming logs, carrying burning cinders away on their heels to show the village girls how brave they were. She remembered the *naïveté* of betrothed couples walking hand in hand

round the bonfire, announcing on this vigil night to friends and neighbours courtships long hidden among the leafy byeways and rocky mountain paths of Brittany. The bells rang a final peal and were silent. With complete darkness the lovers had departed, and for hours there had been no lights anywhere among the huge castellated rocks of the coast, except in the little lighthouse of Ploumanac'h. All was silent, save for the ceaseless rolling of the waves over the shingle, and the whistling of the wind above the cliffs. Man seems but a small thing in the immensity of night.

Many had started on their way, for people come from five or six miles off, or even farther, to the "Pardon" of La Clarté. Among the grassy ravines, by the borders of brooks still overhung with light vapour, farmer folk were waking, cattle in the pastures sent up a fresh smell of trodden mint plants and river-iris, boys were feeding sleepy horses who stood on three legs, their listless heads drooping over the manger, the cottages at Tregastel, L'Ile Grande and Pleumeur, and along the whole coast, were all awake and excited by the same impetus. Fishermen were out even earlier than usual, and

they had got up to make fresh hot tea, as when the tide is in and they expect a great haul.

"Is it time to start yet, master?" voices would murmur in the darkness.

"Yes, it's two hours to daybreak now."

A man would open a cottage door and study the clouds drifting over the sky, still almost in total darkness, and come back, having discovered the correct time by some mysterious means.

"It's time to start now."

The Guens were getting ready too, for, though they had not far to go, Madame Corentine would start in the dark to avoid gossip of friends and neighbours by day. She had already caught whispers of the old scandal as she passed open house-doors, and had decided to show herself as little as possible in Perros. So she was dressing now by the light of a tiny oil lamp lent by her father, the house only possessing one. She could hear Simone moving about in the next room, and Marie-Anne making pious requests in a slow drowsy voice.

"You'll pray for me?"

"Yes, Aunt."

"And for Sullian at sea?"

"Yes."

"And for the little baby that's coming?"

"Of course I will!"

Marie-Anne said something more, but the murmur was too low to be overheard in the next room. Madame Corentine looked through the crack of the half-opened door, and saw Simone before the mirror, making her affirmative answers with great earnestness and deliberation.

When they had all gone, Marie-Anne went downstairs in her night-gown to bolt and bar the door; then, feeling cold and rather nervous in the deserted house, she went back to bed. Her room was in total darkness. The wind shook the slates on the penthouse roof below, and rattled the shutters that were now admitting the first pale shafts of daylight. The tide was rising. She turned to the wall and closed her eyes. Up till now the voices and footsteps of her father, Corentine, and Simone had drowned the noise of the sea, but now it resounded through the silent town, and she seemed to hear mournful sighing echoes from every beach and dangerous reef along the coast. When Marie-Anne was a child the sea had always attracted and interested her. She

would spend long summer afternoons, her hair tangled over her eyes, lying on her stomach on the cliff, watching the waves roll and the spray fly into the air, as friendly as were all the other little girls along the coast with the mighty element which might one day widow them. She would run barefoot over the shingle, after storms, looking for shells, and picking up things she threw away, tin cans, bottles and floating spars of wood covered with minute organisms bred in the water. When a tempest got up in the night she would lie awake in her bed, enjoying her fears, because father was there at the opposite end of the room, and he would comfort and reassure her. She would lie with the sheet over her head listening to the great song of the Breton coast, the wild music which echoes from every beach in one sonorous hymn.

But now she shrank in horror from the sound. She would never walk along the cliff, and the wind terrified her. She knew that the sea carries men away, separates husband and wife, breaks hearts. She tried not to look at the widows of Perros, they made her think. She knew the long suspense, the anxiety of delayed letters, the agony of forc-

ing her poor mind for hours together to other subjects, because all was a blank when she tried to picture the ship, the loved one, or the port whither he was bound. But the night was the worst time, when the sea was in tumult as now, and Marie-Anne fancied someone was calling her. It is he, far away, hidden in the infinite distance of fog and foam. "Marie-Anne! Marie-Anne!" he cries. . . . . She awakes with outstretched arms. Oh! how she hates the sea! On the morning of the "Pardon" the sea had been singing its wicked song, and Marie-Anne lay with her head hidden, trying not to think.

CHAPTER VI

The three travellers had gone up the steep road from the village, past the church and the Erskine cross on the right, and were on the road which goes round the crest of the hills above the beach of Trestrao. The horse, a sorry-looking white nag, so skinny that when he drew the baker's cart full of bread he looked as if a breath would blow him away, was trotting resolutely along between the shafts of the trap; the Captain and Simone were in front, and Madame Corentine behind on a camp stool. It was the grey, cheerless hour before the dawn and already there were signs that the day would not be fine. The wind was blowing steadily from the West, driving the mist along, not as fog is gradually lifted and dissolved by the rising sun, but in a dank, heavy mass, covering the ground for miles round. The whole countryside looked dim, as if heavy with damp and slumber. The horizon had shrunk to the two points nearest the cliffs. The sea was colourless, except where the

waves slowly rolled in over the sands of Trestrao in pale green curves.

"This is like Norwegian weather," remarked the Captain. The two women were silent with cold. Their eyes, tired of seeing nothing but dreary vapour, continually returned to the object facing them, the steeple of La Clarté chapel, which rose sharp and straight from a platform of bare rock. As they came nearer, voices and steps could be heard rising from the mist-drowned valleys below. The furze-bushes on either side of the road parted from time to time to allow a cart to pass. Groups of pilgrims turned into the high road from the tortuous paths bordered with piled-up stones, which divide the fields; others came along the cliffs. Simone watched with curious eyes the peasants they left behind on foot, but her mother averted her head lest she should see recognition in their faces or hear them whisper: "There, that's Guen's daughter, the one who left her husband at Lannion. . . . Look! . . . . Look! . . . . There she is! . . ."

The murmur of voices grew in the distance. The horse of his own accord slackened his pace and began slowly to climb the

pebbly incline. Guen put on his responsible pilot expression, narrowing his eyes, looking neither to right nor left, and trying to keep the cart clear of the fast-thickening crowd beside the wheels. A few wretched-looking thatched cottages, hidden away in the shadow of the great round lichen-covered rocks, composed the poverty-stricken village. In the midst rose the little granite nave with its Gothic arches and openwork coping; the belfry, amidst its surrounding pierced stonework, looking like a church candle in a lace-paper holder. The darkness was lifting. A faint band of rose-pink, veiled in fog, showed on the horizon of Perros, behind the pilgrims. It was the dawn. The distant moan of the sea grew louder. Gulls sailed across the sea. The bell rang for the first Mass. Owing to the quantities of men who refused to make way for him, Guen with difficulty went round the low wall which surrounded the church. Considering their numbers they were fairly quiet. Mostly fishermen or peasants from adjoining villages, they all wore dark clothes, and had the same type of angular figure and wrinkled face. Even on a holiday they kept their cold, fixed expression, as of men who are accustomed to

watch the sea for hours, on the lookout for possible dangers.

On every doorstep and pathway beggars were imploring alms in a guttural dialect. Groups of them hung round the openings in the churchyard wall, lamentable objects, furiously vying with each other who should show the pilgrims the most horrible wounds and leprous disfigurements. Idiots wearing women's petticoats were revolving round their sticks. Hurdy-gurdy players were grinding out lugubrious tunes. And at the further end of the green, all down the slope leading to Ploumanac'h, were strolling vendors of eatables setting out trestle tables with piles of flabby rolls, half-baked cakes and figures made of bruised but unripe pears and plums. A few white caps were to be seen here and there among this dreary section of the crowd, but most of the coifs were in the church.

Guen unharnessed the horse in a neighbouring field, already uncomfortably crowded with carts, upturned barrows with empty shafts in the air, and horses tethered to the gorse-hedges. Then he followed Corentine and Simone into church.

The morning passed as all other mornings

of "Pardons," when the pilgrims are Bretons. After wandering all round the place and the houses, looking at the costumes and the stalls at the fair, and lunching in a room of which the background was a slab of rock, the two women left the Captain to talk to old acquaintances who kept coming up to speak to him, and sat down some distance off, on a little wall from which they could see the procession when it came down the slope. The mist was still drifting inland. They could see the sea like a strip of burnished metal, beyond the dim, confused mass of rocks. Even the rosy tip of Ploumanac'h Point looked grey. At their feet lay the desolate valley, ploughed into ravines where the sea had once been; glimpses of moorland and wretched thatched hovels within stone walls, the rising road and, just at the foot of the cliff, the Calvary, still black with the smoke of yesterday's bonfire. They sat on a long while, exchanging a few words now and then, depressed by the cheerless landscape and the dull sky.

But presently there came an influx of pilgrims and spectators from the right. The grass was now completely covered, and only a moving mass of black hats, white caps and

opened umbrellas could be seen. Strangers, lost in this tide of humanity, tried to make their way out. Tall Breton lads, head and shoulders above the crowd, pushed their way through, on their faces the stolid smile of brute force. At last the bells were heard above the blast of trumpets from the Seminary of Tréguier, announcing the procession. On it came, cleaving a way between the dark masses of people, headed by a silver cross hung with little bells ringing a tiny peal; then followed boys and girls from different villages in badges and sashes, boys from training ships wearing blue jerseys and open collars, and carrying three models of ships which hang from a cord in front of the altar all the year round. As the girls passed, Simone, rather against her mother's will, joined their ranks and walked with them down the slope. The mother was left alone. Then came the young married women, walking two abreast, their faces still retaining the pure expression of their maidenhood. They carry in one hand a lighted taper, and in the other a white or grey bundle containing the new-born babe consecrated to Our Lady of Hope, whose statue is borne along in front of them. Behind walk the widows, no longer

wearing the coloured shawl nor the pin which holds up the lappets of their coif; its two muslin wings hang down on their shoulders. One day is enough to revive the hard, defiant look of their race. Some are still quite young. Slowly they descend, impelled by the long black line of men, followed by banners, music, and chanting priests. The procession has stretched its full length down the slope, and is losing itself in the misty distance below. The wind, waving among white caps, sashes, badges, coloured aprons and muslin caps, stirs them into a foam frothing on either side of the roadway.

Madame Corentine watched the procession as long as she could distinguish Simone's black felt hat and floating veil. When nothing could be seen but a vague mass undulating round the Calvary, she turned to look at the groups of seaside visitors stationed one above the other on the little stone hedges across the road. Some were seated a good way behind her up the slope, and as her eyes gradually travelled upwards she began to feel a vague sense of alarm. Directly her daughter left her she had a presentiment she should see *him* again, among the crowd. Naturally he would not

often go to a Fête, but he would be sure not to miss Lannion. She began to feel certain they would meet.

And she was right. Almost facing her, separated from her by about twenty of the devout laity who were following the clergy in irregular ranks, was Guillaume l'Héréec, her husband. She stooped instinctively that the stream of people might hide her. It was ten years since she had seen him. There he stood, leaning against a smooth rock, a little behind a young woman whom she did not recognize, and a stranger in a white Tam-o'-shanter, who was drawing rapidly in his sketch-book. Guillaume seemed looking towards Ploumanac'h. He was much changed, though not exactly in the sense of having aged; his square beard (worn a little longer than in old days) was still almost black. He had grown stouter, but it was his expression that had so completely altered; he had lost all his youth, all the fire in his glance, and his energy had turned to doggedness. His face was the face of a man who feels life a burden, and knows that for some sorrows there is no respite.

At first Corentine was touched; she was not prepared for what she saw. She could

not take her eyes off the man she had first loved and then hated; she gazed at him in pitying astonishment.

The young woman in front of him was now standing on a chair, applauding the procession daintily with slight taps of her fingers, as if she were at a play. She leaned back to say a word or two over her shoulder to M. l'Héréec, but he only smiled faintly and again became absorbed in the contemplation of some object in the distance on the slope.

Suddenly Madame Corentine realized that her husband had seen Simone, and was watching her. He had come for her! He was waiting for her to pass him again, to recognize her, to speak to her, to carry her off! Ancient jealousies awoke in her with redoubled force, and in a second all her newborn pity was dead. He was once more the enemy, and she a prisoner among the crowd. Her excited imagination made her believe it treachery on her husband's part to come to La Clarté. She told herself he was a coward, forgetting that she had come to Perros with the express intention of letting Simone spend a few days with him. The fact that this meeting had not been arranged by her,

with the choice of time and place, exasperated Corentine. She would prevent it; any public scandal would be better than weak submission. She began to tremble, and nearly cried out in her agitation, as her daughter returned among the girls now ascending the slope. Simone, with radiant face and eyes raised to Heaven, was singing a Breton hymn as she drew near her mother. L'Héréec followed her with his eyes,—Corentine noticed that he turned white and took a step forward. For a moment the blood stood still in Madame l'Héréec's veins. Simone advanced, unconscious of anything around her. Then she looked for her mother, and, intending to start again with the procession, exclaimed, "It *was* a good thing we came, mother!" But the mother stretched out her arm and violently drew the girl to her. "Come with me, come!" she exclaimed.

"Where?"

"Come, quick!"

The spectators drew back to let the young girl pass.

"I feel ill!" said Madame Corentine, drawing her away. "Come. . . . I must get indoors."

She threaded her way among the groups round her, neither looking up nor relaxing her trembling grasp of Simone's hand. She shook with terror at the sound of an angry man's voice, but it was only that of an itinerant vendor whose trestle-table had been overturned.

The little inn where they had all arranged to meet was at the north end of the green.

"Come in," said Madame Corentine, "go into the little room on the other side, it is more comfortable. . . . Put on your cloak. . . . We'll get home. . . ."

She herself remained standing by the door, now and then casting a glance at the few men who stood near. The one she dreaded to see was not amongst them. The only person she recognized was Guen, calmly talking to the other old sailors of his acquaintance. She said a few words to him which made him start off directly towards the field near by, nodding his head in affirmation. Poor old Captain Guen in his twenty years of married life had come across nothing so sad as this ever-recurring war between husband and wife. It seemed a terrible thing to be hurrying his daughter away for fear of his son-in-law, and his grand-daughter

for fear of her father! He felt inclined to curse the Fête of Lannion for disturbing them after fifteen years.

The bells were ringing a joyous peal for the return of the Seminarists to their chapel, when Guen's cart started on the return journey. He drove round the outskirts of the village. The two women were silent. Simone asked no more questions; she had guessed at the state of things. She felt that her parents were disputing the possession of her, and she suffered as she had so often suffered at Jersey, but more bitterly. In addition she felt deep regret at not having seen her father, and that he should have only caught a glimpse of her happily singing, while perhaps his own eyes were full of tears. Perhaps he had thought her too light-hearted and thoughtless! Was it wrong to have seemed so cheerful when even unconsciously in his presence?

The Captain tried to cause a diversion and amuse his two companions, by telling them stories of Trébeurden and Pleumeur which he had just heard. But he found no response. They were all longing to get home. The two women, wrapped up in their long cloaks, the hoods drawn forward to protect

them against the wind which had now risen to a gale, refused to look at the road, or the people, and took no further interest in anything.

CHAPTER VII

Meanwhile Marie-Anne, feeling nervous and anxious, had been watching the pot simmering over the fire, and the clay pans containing the dinner, which were wedged down as far as the handle into the fiery coals whose light illumined the fast-darkening room. Instead of sitting quietly thinking or sewing as her sister had advised, Marie-Anne had been on her feet ever since the morning, watching the weather from windows and door. Where was her husband in this storm? He must have left Bilbao quite six days ago. Why had there been no news of him? He would have sent word, surely, if he had reached the port of Bordeaux. He must still be on the high seas, sailing a hazardous course on a bad coast, in danger of shipwreck, with his four Lannion sailors, and the little cabin-boy from Ploumanac'h who had cried at starting. She could not imagine the weather being any different outside Bordeaux from what it was at Perros, and for the last hour the sea had been terrifying to

behold. The bay was a mass of short choppy waves, and young green leaves were wrenched off the trees and whirled along in the blast. The water and the sky were both black as night, and empty of any sign of life. A few minutes before a tiny sailing vessel had passed, and the sight of it alone in the immensity had sent Marie-Anne back to the fire with a face as white as her collar.

The cart rattled into the little courtyard.

"Well, dearest," asked Madame Corentine, "have you had a letter?"

"Nothing! And he's been due nearly four days. . . . No letter!"

"You are over-tired," said her sister, looking at Marie-Anne's haggard face, and feeling her clammy hands. "Now be a good girl, and try to keep calm. The letter will come . . . it's only delayed."

It was easy to tell her to keep calm; even old Guen could not understand why his son-in-law had not written.

"I can't make it out," he said, "he must have stayed in Spain."

He went to the door to look at the weather again, and came back gloomily shrugging his shoulders, while his elder daughter went upstairs, saying she must take off her cloak

and write a letter to Jersey to catch the post. But she had no letter to write, and did not take off her cloak. She stood behind the window-curtain, holding it back with one finger, and pressing her forehead against the glass, in the endeavour to recognize someone among the people returning from the "Pardon" and now crossing the jetty. She stood there in dumb anguish, wondering if he would pass the house. She knew now there would be no scene, no attempt to carry Simone off. He had seen his child, and had made no attempt to attract her attention; his step forward had been unconscious instinct. Corentine was obliged to admit to herself that he had behaved perfectly. He must have been sorely tempted to speak . . . what a sad, sad face! . . . What a life he must lead at Lannion! . . . as lonely as her own, and without the child . . . with nothing . . . It was strange that in leaving Jersey Corentine was so entirely absorbed in the one idea of keeping Simone that she had barely given a thought to her own position. And if for one moment the idea of a possible meeting with l'Héréec could have occurred to her, her feelings of revenge and her longing for reprisals would

have banished every other consideration. But now she felt some strange new agitation. In spite of all her efforts to preserve her proud indifference, it seemed harder to despise her husband now than when she was far away from him.

The pilgrims filed by in the fast-gathering darkness. Was he going to cross the jetty with the others without so much as a look at the old house? Perhaps he had already passed, in one of the vehicles rapidly driving away in the distance. What did he care? She kept telling herself that she would feel calmer when he had left Perros, and that it was only duty which kept her there watching over Simone. And all the time she knew that she was lying to herself. She stayed on, resting her burning forehead against the rattling window-pane.

Presently, through all her agitation, Corentine fancied she could distinguish the noise of a horse hurrying down the slope of Perros and slackening speed as it reached the harbour. She felt sure it was harnessed to his own trap. She drew back, leaving only a strip of the window bare, and recognized a cart with a blue tilt slowly driving round the other end of the little courtyard. It stopped

for a second, and a rough, dark head leaned out and looked up at the two windows in turn; then, at a sharp lash of the whip, the horse trotted off in the direction of St. Quay.

Suddenly the tears rushed to her eyes at the sight of the dumb, self-contained sorrow which had paid a tribute to the memory of Simone, or of herself, perhaps. Her heart melted and she sobbed. She cowered down in the arm-chair, with her back to the window, feeling utterly wretched. Simone seemed no more than a toy, just important enough to take up her mother's time without filling her life. All the shams and conventionalities of her life broke down, her eyes were opened to the living lie of her existence, to the false fabric of happiness she had tried to raise. In a second all this was shattered, or rather, she saw in a flash it had never existed; her heart was empty, and she had lost what could never be replaced.

She remained in the same position, helplessly sobbing, without remorse and without any idea of retrieving the past, pitying her own unfortunate lot, and acknowledging the irony of such separations. Between her and the man who had just driven past the house lay a judicial decree, absence, public

opinion, and the bitterness of wrong constantly brooded over. They no longer loved each other. And yet at the mere sight of him she felt as forlorn and unhappy as she had done ten years before. Nothing had really altered.

"How wrong I was to leave St. Hélier!" she said to herself.

"Maman!" called Simone, "Grandpapa is waiting dinner for you. You *must* have had a long letter to write!"

She rapidly sponged her eyes and went down.

CHAPTER VIII

When Mme. l'Héréec came back into the room the others all thought she had been crying over the alarm about Sullian, and the father felt glad his two daughters were so united. He gave a look at Corentine to warn her that poor Marie-Anne must not be over-alarmed, and in his eyes there was gratitude as well as warning. The candle set on the table-cloth lit up four anxious faces. Guen, who had talked so much all the way home, only answered his granddaughter in monosyllables, when the girl tried to bring an element of cheerfulness into the lugubrious repast.

"Weren't those little boys with big collars from the training-ships?" she would ask, or, "Was the 'Pardon' at La Clarté a finer sight when you were young, Grandfather?"

But the thoughts of Grandfather and Marie-Anne were many miles away from the "Pardon" at La Clarté.

Madame Corentine could only think of the covered cart stopping in the little court-

yard and rapidly driving off towards Lannion. But there were fugitive instants when the four people were as one. When a furious gust of wind, louder than the others, roared down the chimney, banged the shutters back to the walls, and pushed the massive door forward on its hinges, as if a man were coming in, the four would raise their heads simultaneously with a shuddering glance in the direction of the angry sea howling outside in the night. Each time it happened, the Captain moved his plate, or asked for wine to distract Marie-Anne's attention; his heart ached for his "little girl."

After dinner he lit his pipe, and, at his wit's end to disperse the gloom, took down from the nail in the wall a little ship he had once made himself as a model of his brig *Le Légué*. He sat down by the fire, his two daughters on his right, and Simone leaning against a chair, and began explaining the sails and the rigging to the travellers from Jersey. Marie-Anne knew it all by heart, and paid no attention. He had only got as far as the foresail-yard when three knocks were heard on the door. Guen called "Come in!" half thinking it was only the wind. All the sails of the toy ship rattled wildly. A

very fat man opened the door just wide enough to slip through, and closed it, pressing both hands with all his might against the wood.

"Wish you all a very good evening!" he said. His face was heavy and stupid from extreme obesity, his smooth-shaven cheeks hung down over a small black moustache, and his tiny eyes looked out from under his close-cropped grey hair. His brown tweed suit, drenched with rain, gave him the look of a swimming-instructor.

Guen and Marie-Anne had recognized the Syndic of the Maritime Trades Union, and were too taken aback to speak.

"There's a telegram from the Admiralty for you, Captain," he said, unbuttoning his coat with difficulty, and holding his drenched oilskin cap in one hand. He handed a paper to the Captain. Guen rose in such haste that the toy ship fell to the floor, smashing its masts. No one paid any attention to it. While he read he was seized with a tremor which he instantly suppressed, as he turned to Marie-Anne.

"It's bad news, children."

No one asked what the news was. Everyone knew. Marie-Anne, white as death and

on the point of swooning, kept her eyes, the only living things in her face, fixed on her father's lips. He read the telegram:

"'*Topsail, longboat and deck-ladder of the Jeanne of Lannion washed ashore this evening.*' The coastguard from La Tremblade sent this message."

There was not a sound in the room.

The catastrophe had happened, the shipwreck which from one day to another threatens the Breton woman with widowhood. Marie-Anne had felt it coming for the past four-and-twenty hours. She closed her eyes, let herself fall against Corentine, who sat next to her, and broke into a fit of weeping. For more than a minute nothing was heard in the big room but the sound of her smothered sobs and the shrieking of the wind.

Simone had knelt down in front of her mother, and was gently stroking Marie-Anne's pale cheek.

"Don't cry so, Aunt Marie-Anne, perhaps the worst has not happened."

Mother and daughter, with streaming eyes, gazed alternately at Guen and the Syndic, as if to implore some word of hope or consolation from either of the men. But they were silent.

Guen, incapable of speech, was reading the telegram for the tenth time, his wrinkled face lined with suffering. He felt the mute appeal in the women's eyes, and made a great effort to appear calm.

"My little one, remember I have often been shipwrecked myself," he said.

"Marie-Anne, do listen to father!" begged Corentine, "don't grieve so terribly!"

"Bear up, Aunt Marie-Anne, listen to Grandfather!"

They looked up at old Guen, begging for some word that would console the prostrate creature supported between them.

"You know men do come back," continued the Captain, "and there is no mention of the ship itself. It was her first journey, and she such a fine craft! Perhaps he coasted Spain, meaning to go to Bordeaux another way . . . there! . . . there!"

There came no answer to these soothing phrases, which were so difficult to invent and say. Marie-Anne continued to weep as if she did not hear him, and stubbornly buried her head in the folds of her sister's dress. One of the lappets of her cap hung crumpled round her neck like the broken wing of a bird.

Guen came near. Seldom demonstrative, he softly touched his daughter's shoulder and bent over her.

"My own little one," he said, close to her ear, "I swear to you that I still have hope. Come now, what is it that is torturing you so? The ladder washed away, that's it, isn't it? . . . But it was rotten, Sullian was always saying he must heave it overboard. . . . Come now, you remember that, don't you?"

Sullian's name roused Marie-Anne. Still clinging to her sister with both hands, she gazed at her father with wide eyes and hair plastered to her forehead with perspiration, as if she had been violently roused from sleep.

"Yes," she said, "it's true, he did say so."

"As for the longboat, my dear," continued Guen, "you know that a heavy sea will carry away anything. . . . And sometimes to lighten the weight of canvas a man will cut down the topsail . . ."

She gradually began to let herself be persuaded to hope, on these bare crumbs of comfort; but when she found that that was all he had to say, she threw her arms round her sister again.

"You can't deceive me," she said, "they're all dead."

And, seeing that no one ventured to contradict her, she sobbed more desperately than before.

"Captain," broke in a gruff voice, "you're only just in time if you want to telegraph to-night."

They had all forgotten the Syndic.

"I'm coming!" cried Guen. ". . . Half past eight. . . . We could get an answer by ten. . . ."

He looked forlornly at the family group and went out with the other man.

"What do you think of the telegram?" asked the Captain directly they were alone. "Is it the worst?"

"I think so, Captain."

"But there's nothing in it about the ship."

"She must be sunk. The estuary by Bordeaux is a fearful place, two out of every four wrecks happen there, as you know yourself, Captain."

"Yes, I do know it."

They spoke without showing emotion, as if discussing the misfortunes of an acquaintance. The storm was so violent that they could hardly hear each other speak. After

walking a few steps on the jetty they turned into a narrow street of closed houses, standing silent in their gardens. Then Guen touched the Syndic's arm, with a hand that trembled more than his voice.

"It's hard, all the same," he said, ". . . a sailor like Sullian, and a ship on her first voyage . . . Do you really believe it's all up?"

The other man shrugged his shoulders, and gazed at the twisted remains of climbing creepers which blew like black vapour in the wind, round the crest of a wall.

"Look here, Captain Guen," he said, disregarding the imploring note in the other's voice, "I have to go to Ploumanac'h to tell the news to old Mother le Dû, whose son was cabin-boy on *La Jeanne*. I'm in no hurry, as you may guess; I can wait outside the post-office till ten. If any answer comes you shall have it directly. If you don't see me, you will know nothing more has been heard."

The Captain nodded in sign of acquiescence. He was grateful, and the Syndic was deeply moved, but neither would show their feelings; seafaring folk understand each other.

They entered the low-roofed house perched sideways on the cliff road. The huge mouth of the pillar-box was surrounded by tufts of fuchsias.

At the same moment Marie-Anne, who had grown calmer and was listening to her sister's reassuring words, suddenly seized Corentine's hand and wrung it hard.

"What is it, darling? Are you ill?"

"It's nothing," answered Marie-Anne. But presently the pain returned, and Marie-Anne understood. She leaned towards her sister.

"Corentine," she whispered, her eyes wide with fear, "my baby will be born to-night."

CHAPTER IX

When Guen returned the ground-floor room was empty. Marie-Anne was walking up and down her room with clenched teeth. She did not look at her sister, who had carried the cradle into a corner and was hastily covering it with the regulation white dimity; nor at an old woman who was half asleep and doubled up, with her hands outstretched on her knees, prepared to sit up for the night. Every now and then Marie-Anne would stop, while beads of moisture broke out on her forehead, but she uttered no complaint, and continued tramping heavily up and down the creaking boards. Guen sat outside the door. He told them the telegram was gone, and the Syndic would let them know if there was any answer.

So the time dragged wearily along, marked only by the rusty tick of the alarum-clock on the chimney-piece. Often the young woman would glance furtively at the dial, no bigger than her fist, on which the last moments of her hope were ebbing away.

Only one more hour. Only three-quarters now. Only twenty minutes. Oh! when ten struck there would be no more news of the dying or dead, no more chance of any; the post-office would have closed. She could think of nothing else. The wife of Sullian Lageat forgot her own sufferings in the all-absorbing suspense. All her heart went out to the one thought: "Will the telegram come?—What will the answer be?—Yes, the ladder was rotten. Yes, longboats do fall into the sea. Yes, foresail masts and yard-arms are often thrown overboard. But . . . what ominous signs! Only a telegram could clear up the mystery. Will it come? . . . What will it be?"

This went on indefinitely, interrupted only by the despairing bursts of helpless love. The love of betrothal and early wedded days was still fresh, and stifling sobs of regret rose in Marie-Anne's throat. Oh, poor young wife, will the best-beloved never return? Are love and happiness gone for ever? Will his arms never open again with a smile of joy to receive her? . . . "Oh, Sullian, my Sullian!" . . . Then she would stop and pray God to have mercy on her. At such moments Corentine would ask her

if she felt worse, and the answer was always no.

Corentine was thinking too. Simone had been sent in to a neighbour, and her mother felt less constrained without her. While the father was going over the course of the Gironde for the hundredth time in his head, she reflected that Marie-Anne, by some fresh irony of fate, was teaching her strange lessons. She envied the wife's tears and her longing for her husband, while another woman had flown from hers, and hated him. Corentine asked herself if at any time her husband's disappearance would have affected her like this. A voice within troubled her saying, "Yes, you would have suffered just as much. You loved him passionately, and you were once as happy as she was."

The old nurse went on falling asleep and waking by fits and starts; when her chest touched her knees she drew herself up.

The windows rattled, the wind howled round the house like voices shrieking in the storm, but through all could be heard the pendulum of the little clock. The attention of both women was rivetted on the few seconds still to elapse; the tempest mattered little now, he had either escaped or was dead.

The wind might blow, they no longer heard it. They were waiting.

When the clock hand touched ten, the alarum did not go off, only a sound of a broken spring was heard inside the little brass box.

Everyone shuddered. Corentine rose to her feet, old Guen looked bewildered, Marie-Anne, deadly white, closed her eyes and, holding on to the mantelpiece, dropped her head on her hands. Then she sank on her knees, and her sister and the nurse raised her.

"Come to bed, Marie-Anne," said Corentine, "you are worn out."

She let them undress her in listless indifference, while the Captain felt his way downstairs, half bemused with grief, and threw wide the door in a last hope of seeing the long-expected Sullian come in.

There was nothing outside but the raging sea beneath clouds which raced across the moon.

CHAPTER X

The child was born at dawn. Marie-Anne had hardly given any sign of suffering. She lay on her bed at the end of the room beneath the half-drawn curtains like a dead woman. When Corentine had whispered almost joyfully, "It's a boy!" the mother had made no answer. Could she rejoice over the son of a dead husband, a poor little creature born while the waves were still rolling over the corpse of his father? How was she to go on living, forever confronted with this pledge of past happiness? Poor children of sailors, how many of you are born of desolate mothers! How many of you are greeted with tears! Something of this sadness seems to have run from the mothers' veins into those of their children, and perhaps that is why seafaring folk are so often pensive and gloomy as if predestined. Corentine sat by the window and dressed the baby. The light of coming day lay in a rosy bar against the horizon, and the sky, swept free of clouds, looked more auspi-

cious. She hurried with her task, choosing the prettiest among the tiny garments piled on a chair, ready to her hand. She tried on several caps, and, when she had fastened the lace ruffle round the little sleeping face, she kissed the infant with unexpected tenderness. She felt more like the real mother of the fragile creature, to whom caresses seemed due. Her heart, which had never been hard to children, melted at the memory of past maternal joys. As the new-born babe lay across her knees in its white long clothes, she felt what infinite happiness it would be to have another child, a son.

It was now broad daylight. The news had been heard in Perros, and a general feeling of sorrow pervaded the place. People met with sad head-shakings, and mothers looked grave. All were remembering tales of the past. Above even the sympathy felt for Marie-Anne, a selfish sense of possible calamity hung over the heads of all the dwellers on the cliff. All who came through the town were told, and looked up at the windows of the house of mourning as they passed. In the courtyard, under the slate penthouse, a dozen or more agitated, black-clad women were assembled. The most ex-

cited were the very young wives, not yet widowed, carrying babies in their arms. They talked in low voices, but with gesticulating arms pointing to the sea, now lying calm as far as the eye could see, with barely a ripple on its clear surface after the two days' tempest.

"When her man left her," said one, "he was in a great state. He felt nervous . . . it's often a sign."

"Oh, that all depends," answered an old woman pinned up tightly in a shawl. "There are no such things as signs. When sorrow's coming, it comes."

"Perhaps the coastguard will answer this morning."

"He can't before eight o'clock. Poor Marie-Anne, only confined last night!"

"It was the shock. Yvon's wife had her baby last year on the night her man was drowned."

"Well, look here," said a third, a very young and pretty woman, whose black velvet bows were still quite new on her trim bodice. "I don't believe it's quite certain, even now. The Syndic is frightened. Only last September I was just as bad as Marie-Anne, everyone had come home but Louis.

There was no news, and nothing had been heard of the ship for two months. One morning old Le Floch came to see me at four o'clock shouting, 'Lise, your husband's in the harbour!' Lord, it did not take me long to get down!" As she spoke she smiled rapturously at the recollection.

Close by, behind the others, a tall old woman, with dishevelled frizzy grey hair like iron filings, was sitting on a stone against the wall. It was the mother of the cabin boy, who had hurried from Ploumanac'h. No one noticed her. She turned a glance of fury on the last speaker.

"Everyone pities the Guens, because they are rich!" she cried, "but there are others in trouble, too. I'm a poor woman, but all I had left was my boy, and the sea's taken him. He helped keep me, and now he's dead! A boy who never gave me an hour's anxiety!"

The women looked at her, and shook their heads pityingly.

The door opened and Guen came out. He had not undressed, and daylight had awakened him. He passed the women, holding himself very straight in his brass-buttoned coat, simply saying, "Marie-Anne's

asleep, I think. Don't make too much noise, my dears," and went on his way.

The mother of Guyon le Dû, the cabin-boy, followed him at some distance, as if begging alms. She wanted her share of the news which he, the rich man, was able to bring to her, news of life or death; for everything in this world has its price, and can be bought with money.

Poor Guen, his bay was looking enchantingly beautiful! The English cutter was going briskly to L'Isle de Thomé, all sails spread in the sun to catch the morning breeze!

"Oh, the sea, what a jade she is!" he murmured. "Never twice alike!" It was long since he had insulted the sea, but he turned his head and would not even look at it.

The townspeople watched him going up the street, each one saying to himself, "He's going for the telegram. He looks aged already . . . as if . . ."

When he reached the post-office he was afraid to go in, but he would not show any emotion before the post-mistress who was looking through the half-open window. He tried to say his usual good morning, and a

he looked at the fuchsia, with its crimson points against the granite, he wanted to remark on its bloom. But the words failed him. With a mere abrupt gesture of greeting, he entered.

The telegram had arrived. "Mainmast of sunken ship to be seen far out to sea. No further wreckage come ashore."

It was quite certain now that *La Jeanne* and her crew were lost. Marie-Anne was a widow, the new-born babe fatherless, and Guen bereft of his son-in-law.

He stopped still for a moment in the passage outside. He had tried so hard to encourage hope for the others that he had finally made himself hopeful, and had been deceived by his own words. Now he realized that at his age he had been reasoning as a child. The calamity was certain the night before; the Syndic had not attempted to conceal his opinion. Who could have ventured to hope?

"Well, my man," he said to himself, "there's nothing left but to go home with the news, and tell them that all is over."

Guen had the courage to thank the postmistress, and then left. The old woman was

waiting for him outside. She asked him in Breton what was on the paper.

"Shipwrecked, my poor Mother le Dû!" he answered.

She did not say thank you, as he had. She shook her fist in his face and poured out a flood of insult and recrimination against him, the dead ship's owner, who had drowned her boy, and all the rich and wicked Captains on the high seas. She shrieked it out in savage fury while he hurried away home, stumbling on the stony slope, his eyes brimming over with tears.

When he reached home there was no one in the courtyard. He went up, determined not to tell them anything. He decided on the way that it would be better to leave Marie-Anne a little longer in uncertainty.

But when he came in she raised herself on her arms, and opened her gentle violet eyes, which she had kept so obstinately shut. They were so sad and distraught, and so deeply sunken that the father hung his head.

"There is no news at all," he said, thinking the lie would pass muster.

But Marie-Anne stared at him a moment longer, and then fell back on her pillows,

murmuring, "I don't believe you, they're all dead!"

Corentine thought the same, and bent down over the baby, so low that her tears could not be seen. She felt a different woman, physically and mentally, after all she had gone through; the sleepless night of watching and anxiety and the care of the child (she would not give him even into the care of Simone, who had come back) had utterly changed her. Her face, though haggard with fatigue, had quite a new expression of gentle pity and sympathetic kindness. Her heart was really changed; she could weep now for the sorrows of others, and longed to devote herself to her sadly tried sister and father. Above all, she felt a kind of satisfaction at being with them all in their common sorrow, instead of at a distance, cut off from all family hopes and fears, helpless and useless. Beneath the repeated shocks of the past two days she had felt herself living the old life, and becoming the daughter and sister she could always have been if . . . Her cup of bitterness was mixed with joy, and she felt herself a better woman, even in Simone's eyes. They were both happier with the new-born child,

and even with the poor grief-distraught Marie-Anne, than in their selfishly comfortable Jersey existence. Neither put her feelings into words, but each felt the new influence and mutually respected the other.

Guen could not bear the spectacle of his sorrowing children for long. He went out again, this time to see the Syndic, for the sake of somewhere to go.

Soon after he had gone, an old woman arrived, a Madame Olier, well known and much respected in the place. Long ago her husband had been drowned, and her heart always went out to poor young widows, broken-hearted and doomed to the long lonely days she knew so well. She walked up, with a step firm as a man's, her long crape veil drawn round her head.

"Good-day!" she said, and Marie-Anne, at the sound of a strange voice, turned her dim eyes upon the visitor and recognized her.

"You are in trouble, Marie-Anne, and I've not come to talk to you, but only to tell you we're going to make a Novena. Would you like that?"

The sick woman nodded gratefully.

"I have asked all the mothers and daughters who know you," continued Madame

Olier, "they are all your friends, Marie-Anne. I have asked Guillo, Betié Naget, Caoullet, Fanchen, Maon, Cario Palanton, Gégo, and little Nehoueder, who has come from Louannec on purpose——"

She stopped, seeing Madame Corentine and Simone looking at her. She had not ventured to invite them, although they would naturally have been the first people to be asked to take part in the Novena. But the two l'Hérées did not belong to Perros, their place was no longer among the honest wives and daughters of fishermen about to pray for one of their sisters under affliction. The old woman's face assumed the distant expression with which quiet people attached to their duties look at those who are living under peculiar conditions. This change of expression was but a flash and Madame Olier turned to the bed.

"*Au revoir,* Marie-Anne. We will begin at once. Keep up your courage!" she said, and, drawing the folds of her crape cloak tightly about her, she disappeared.

Madame Corentine blushed; a few days before she would have angrily protested against such a slight, but in her present changed mood the humiliation roused no

anger within her. In fact Madame l'Héréec was not at all sure that Madame Olier was in the wrong, and she felt anything but pleased with herself. All she could realize was regret. Had Marie-Anne guessed anything? Her next words sounded like an inspiration born of a nature apt at all kinds of consolation, and instinctively aware of what others may be suffering.

"Corentine," she said, "baby must be baptized."

"To-day?"

"The sooner the better. You shall take him."

"Very well, darling."

"Father is to be godfather, and you godmother. I arranged it with . . . ."

Her lips refused to utter the name.

"Yes!" answered Corentine, "I am quite ready and willing. Thank you, dearest. I've dressed your little angel, wouldn't you like to see him?"

"No," said Marie-Anne, in a feeble whisper, "I'm afraid of the likeness. I can't look at him yet . . . later."

When the nurse carried the white bundle past her a few minutes later, she opened her eyes for a second. Guen and Corentine fol-

lowed, bowed down with grief; Simone stayed behind with the mother.

The road is rough and steep from the harbour to the church in higher Perros. It has houses on either side, excepting halfway up, where the sea-shore can be seen between the elm-trees on the barren, sloping fields. The townsfolk, already stirred by the sight of the long line of women going to their Novena, were just talking of the calamity which had overwhelmed the entire district, when Guen and his daughter began to climb the hill, Corentine walking beside the nurse, shading the child from the sun, and the Captain on her other side, a little to the rear. Pity does not last long among average men and women. They had barely perceived Guen and exchanged a few words of sympathy for the Gironde catastrophe when they saw Madame Corentine. Few took any further notice of her. Others made remarks as she passed, which summed up all the unhappy past and the hasty judgment of her neighbours. "Poor old man, it's dreadful for him to have one separated daughter and the other a widow. She's left him long enough in Perros without coming to look after him. Let her go back again.

I would rather lose a daughter than have one like her. She's no blessing to any family!"

Corentine heard some of these observations, and guessed at the rest; she was too proud to weep, but her unshed tears choked her, and the road seemed as if it would never end.

At last the little group rêached the cemetery. Amidst the flower-grown granite graves stood the old church, its open Gothic doorway divided by a small pillar. One side of the roof was quite out of proportion with the other, and reached nearly down to the ground. They went in, and Corentine felt at peace.

On the mouldy stone floor, damp from perpetual shadow, knelt the women of the Novena, at the foot of a column black with the smoke of incense and the rust of ten centuries. Against a dark granite background stood a small statue of Our Lady of Lourdes in her white robes and blue girdle, two golden roses on her feet. It was placed on the heavy border of the cornice. The women's faces were all raised towards her, while Madame Olier in her crape cloak said the Rosary. She recited the first half of the Hail Marys, and the others finished them,

all using the rough dialect of the country. In front of them burned nine slim little candles fastened to the backs of chairs. The first voice began firmly with no inflections:

"Mé o salud Marie, leun o a graces, an otro Doué so ganch beniguet . . ."

and the others ended in a confused murmur:

"Santes Marie Mam da Doué, pédet évidon péliérien . . ."

In a dark chapel at the other end of the church the parish priest was about to baptize the son of Marie-Anne. Corentine and the Captain each touched with one hand the child, who still lay in the other woman's arms. They answered the liturgical questions in a low voice, unable to avoid glancing backwards towards the burning lights and the nine kneeling women.

"Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth?" asked the priest.

"I do," answered Guen and Corentine.

"Santes Marie, Mam da Doué . . . " came from the group of women.

"Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord?"

"I do."

"Santes Marie, Mam da Doué . . . "

"Do you believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting?"

"I do."

"*Santes Marie, Mam da Doué, pédet évidon péliérien . . .*"

The two groups listened to each other in awe, at the sound of the prayers going up to Heaven together, some for the child just entering life, others for the shipwrecked father, for ever to be unknown to his child. The Rosary grew in volume as a mighty psalm, heavy with the sighs of the worshippers in recurring waves of supplication. Guen, Corentine, and the priest himself lowered their voices more and more, till they were lost among the damp vaulted arches of the roof. A ray of sun came in through part of the carving of the doorway, like a fiery sword.

"*Santes Marie, Mam da Doué, pédet évidon péliérien . . .*"

No bell was rung for the baptism of the son of the shipwrecked Sullian. The priest had finished his ceremonies before the women rose from their knees.

"Come!" said Guen, for no one in the chapel attempted to move. Corentine and

the nurse had both turned towards the group of mourning women at the feet of the blue-girdled statue. The child slept.

Without answering, they dumbly obeyed him, and walked out with heads bent down, absorbed heart and soul in the prayers which grew fainter and fainter in the distance:

"*Santes Maric, Mam da Doué . . .* "

They crossed the cemetery beneath a cloudless sky and blazing sunshine. The whole air was full of the strong scent of mignonette planted round one of the graves. At the end of the path, in front of the upright stone dividing the cemetery from the road, the two women raised their eyes, and looked round like sleepers painfully aroused. Corentine's heart was torn between her sister's sorrow and the dumb despair of the man whose step she heard behind her; feeling that she had not been able to make him happy. She had lost her right to live in her native town, to console and sweeten his last years. She felt a yearning for peace, aspirations towards something higher and better; a longing for sacrifice rose from the depths of her soul and mingled with her pity for those belonging to her.

Two beggar girls knitting by the roadside

began to laugh at her tragic face. This last insult, so little merited, and so poignant at such a moment, made her turn round instinctively to look for some panoply of defence. She found it in the child.

Guen had walked towards Trestrao beach where one of his friends lived, to talk of his son-in-law and the Gironde; he could not keep his grief to himself.

Corentine turned to the nurse. "Give me the child," she cried. "I will carry him home."

She took little Sullian, his muslin draperies covering her shoulder; and the little sleeping red face sank confidently on her arm. Proud of her burden, protected against all sneers by the innocent infant she was carrying, she went down into the town among the women of the place, none of them proof against the sight of a new-born baby.

"Look! She's carrying Sullian Lageat's boy. Guen allows it to do her honour. The woman's a mother herself, after all."

She went on, listening to nothing, absorbed in joy and peace, pressing the child to her breast, as if to absorb herself in the little dumb unseeing creature. She smiled at him, and talked, not with her lips, but

from some newly-awakened depths of maternal love which made her heart dilate with joy.

"I wish I had other children like you . . . how I would have loved them . . . how I could still love them. . . . The breast you lean against would so willing have nourished them. . . . My pretty darling, my little nephew, I wish you were my own!"

She walked on air. Calmed and strengthened, she went up into the sick room with a radiant face. Happily Marie-Anne was asleep and did not see her sister. She slept for three hours, and Simone left them. Between the baby in his cradle and Corentine, who watched beside it, the unspoken dialogue continued. The mute appeal of the closed eyes and the little lips turned towards a maternal breast, the little face through which a new soul seemed to look at the unhappy wife, roused the latent longing for motherhood and hope for new life till Madame l'Héréec felt as she had not done for years.

In the peace of the quiet room, beside the sleeping mother and child, spiritual grace was working in its own mysterious way. A human soul was accusing itself, gradually becoming aware of possibilities of self-sacri-

fice and atonement, and rising, tremulous with happiness, towards the light.

Towards Louannec the cliffs were turning golden under the setting sun. Not even the murmur of the sea broke the stillness. Each soft breath of Marie-Anne was echoed by her baby, like the flutter of wings.

Suddenly there came the sound of a footstep in the courtyard. Corentine leaned out of the window. Her father was hurrying along, followed by a crowd crying out, "Is it possible? Is it really true?" Corentine turned pale; she went to the head of the stairs and listened.

Guen came in, trembling in every limb, with a wild look in his face. Noiselessly he approached the bed where lay his sleeping daughter, and knelt down.

"Marie-Anne!" he whispered, "father's little girlie. . . ."

No movement. He took his darling's hand, the rough, freckled hand that lay helpless along the counterpane, and fondled it.

"Marie-Anne!"

She looked at him in dumb despair, but almost immediately her eyelids opened wider; she saw that her father was smiling

through his tears, and that he could not articulate a word.

In anguish she opened her mouth, raised herself up, and, with her stiffened arms pressed against the sheet, bent forward.

"What is it? What is it?" she cried, as if her very life were ebbing away.

"Marie-Anne . . . some English sailors . . . at Bilbao . . . the whole crew . . . I told you so . . . he's safe!"

He rose from his knees, and took his daughter in his arms.

"Safe, my child, safe!" he repeated, and broke into sobs.

When he drew away and let her sink back again, Marie-Anne's face could be seen. She believed in the good news with the same faith as she had believed in her sorrow. The pretty blonde hair framed a still deadly pale face upon the pillow, but one moment had transfigured it. Youth, joy, love had returned. Her sweet hyacinth-coloures eyes were full of rapture beneath their upturned golden lashes; light seemed to play about her forehead, and her mouth smiled at happy visions. The Marie-Anne of old days had come back, the happy bride, the woman with the saint's face out of some legend of the

past. The old father continued, his face now beaming.

"They met with some English . . . You know, darling, the mouth of the Gironde is always crammed with ships. . . . When the girl at the post-office gave me the paper, I guessed it was all right . . . she looked as pleased as I was. . . . Wasn't it splendid news, girls? The ship is lost, but all the men were saved. Listen, Marie-Anne, I must go and tell Mother le Dû that her boy, the cabin-boy, is safe. . . . You'll spare me? Everyone must be happy to-day!"

She was no longer listening, she needed no proof, no details. She believed. Sullian was alive.

Corentine was gazing at her fixedly from one corner of the room. One thing had struck her more than anything else in the crisis they had just passed through, and that was the wonderful happiness of Marie-Anne.

"How she loves him!" thought Madame l'Héréec. Bewildered in the atmosphere of love, she hardly dared to take a step forward lest she should cry out, with her whole soul, "I too want love, I too am widowed!"

Marie-Anne turned towards her sister, and then to the cradle.

"Bring me my son," she said.

"Oh, my beloved darling!" she cried, when he was in her arms, cheek pressed to cheek, "your father is alive!"

Alone with Corentine, she uncovered her breast, and suckled her infant Sullian; and as she bent over her baby she heard her sister whisper, "Pray for me, I'm going to Guillaume."

. . . . . .

Ten minutes later Marie-Anne, propped against her pillows, was gazing at her son sleeping beside her. Close by the bed sat the elder woman, worn out with fatigue but determined on her new resolve. She listened in all docility to the younger and more ignorant.

"Corentine dear . . . you ought to go at once. . . . You mustn't talk to Simone . . . it would upset her . . . you must humble yourself and not take offence too easily. . . . They don't appreciate you, but I do. . . . Go, dear, be brave and kind, and prepared for any sacrifice. . . . It is such a wonderful thing to be loved!"

CHAPTER XI

In accordance with her sister's advice, and also with some vestige of pride, Madame Corentine wished her departure to be concealed from Simone if possible; the grandfather had volunteered to take charge of her.

Now that Sullian was safe, and there was some prospect of Corentine's fate improving, the old man could no longer contain himself, so great was his longing for fresh air. If he had only had himself to consider he would have rowed out to the open sea; but he hesitated, thinking the boat was too dirty for Simone. The thwarts had not been dusted for a week, and not a drop of water had been emptied out of the hold.

"Put on your cloak, Simone," he called to her, "and we'll go out together if you like."

She was delighted. Ever since her arrival she had seen nothing but sad, anxious faces around her, and her youth began to clamour for some change of ideas. She was only a girl of fifteen, after all.

"Grandfather, are we going in the boat?" she asked, hoping that was what he meant.

"No, I intend taking you for a walk along the cliff, as far as——"

"Oh no, please let's go in the boat!"

"But——"

"Why not? It's a long time since you went out boating, grandfather; I'm sure you're longing to!"

"But the boat isn't ready!" said the old fellow, secretly delighted, "I haven't tidied her up lately."

"Oh, that doesn't matter! Let's go right out to sea, grandfather!"

He nodded, with a pleased smile.

"Youth, youth!" he said, "I suppose I can't refuse, if I want you to grow fond of me!"

Simone put on a white knitted cap, which only half concealed the coils of her hair. It was pretty to see them walking together towards the jetty. Happiness had made the Captain young again; he felt that he was looking alert and brisk as he passed groups of seaside visitors who, having nothing else to do, are always ready to watch anyone walking in a hurry. Those who knew him by sight compared this expedition with his usual walks accompanied by Marie-Anne, dragging herself along in misery of mind

and body. Little Simone was light as a feather. She walked like a regular little cabin-boy out crab-potting, in a hurry to get to his work.

"I didn't know you were so fond of the sea," said Guen, who had already caught sight of his boat, lying motionless on the dazzling water at the pier-head.

"I adore the water. I've often been on excursions from Jersey, and I know the names of everything to do with a boat: mainsail, fore-sail, jib, top-gallant, studding-sail——"

"But what about your seamanship?"

"Try me!"

"You don't even know how to take in a reef!"

"Look here!"

She smiled at him just like a child, her eyes full of light, and her mouth showing two rows of sound strong teeth, as white and sparkling as shells.

"Simone, my dear," said the Captain, "you've certainly found your way straight to my heart since the first of August."

The old man was happier than he had been for many a long day. His step rang on the pavement with a renewal of life and vigour.

There was no top-gallant or studding-sail in Guen's boat, only a worn-out jib and a discoloured sail on a bent mast.

"Is Mama sitting with my aunt?" asked Simone, taking her place in the stern, and looking up at the narrow grey house between its jutting neighbours on either side. Guen feigned not to hear, and busied himself with the anchor.

"Is Mama indoors?"

This time he flushed, no doubt from the effort of dragging up the great iron hook which was as useful in catching huge fish as for fastening the boat.

"No," he answered carelessly, "your mother is going to Lannion."

"To Lannion?" said Simone, turning round.

He did not look back, guessing at the energy of her unseen gesture.

"Yes, to do some shopping for Marie-Anne, I believe," he continued, trying to pass the matter off lightly. "Lots of things are wanted for a new-born baby."

A moment after he looked at her as he was hoisting sail: "Let out a bit, child!" he called out, and saw that her eyes were

still fixed on the house in the harbour, and tears were not far off.

"It's difficult to hide things from children," thought Guen; "she guesses there's something up."

But he was determined to be cautious.

"As you know how to manage the boat, Simone," he said, making fast the sail, "take the tiller and make straight for Thomé. Pull with your right hand."

The boat doubled the sun-scorched jetty, which at this hour of the day smelt strongly of dried seaweed.

"That is our equivalent for the smell of new-mown hay, Mademoiselle Simone!"

She was once more the quiet, gentle young girl of whom he was growing fonder day by day as he discovered fresh charms in her. She looked straight before her at the vast plain of waters between their hilly banks, and seemed to have entirely given herself up to the pleasure of sailing. They were getting up speed; the wind came blowing over the hills of Louannec, making all the canvas flap. Guen, now they were fairly started, sat down by Simone, and began to feel thoroughly happy.

"I daresay you've heard me abuse the sea

these last few days," he said, "but I didn't mean it." He was already regretting the insults forced from him by his grief.

"One gets angry with the sea sometimes, my dear, as if she were a woman, you know. One loses one's temper and gets angry. And then one comes back and makes it up."

"Any real separation is unbearable, I suppose?" asked Simone, still looking out to sea.

"Yes, quite," answered Guen, confused. "I couldn't live a week away from the sea. After all, it's quite natural, everyone's the same."

"Oh! but you love the sea more than most people, grandfather!"

"Yes," he answered, pleased with her remark, and relieved at getting off delicate ground; "I don't deny it. I go to sea more than any man in Perros, any old man, I mean . . . more to port, Simone. . . . Let her go. . . . Doesn't the sea look beautiful to-day?"

They were scudding through the channel between the Castle point and the rocks of Thomé, the clear, emerald-green current carrying them along as it rushed beneath the keel. On their left were rocky creeks and

intervals of beach. At Trestrao, bathers in red, white, or black shewed like specks on the sand; here and there a sunshade was caught and blown along by the wind, looking tinier than a chickweed flower.

"Keep out, Simone, abreast of Rouzic!"

As far as eye could see the sea lay like a sheet of glass. The breeze did not raise a ripple. Streaks of blue, like the track of lost ships, lay along the white surface of the water shining and twinkling in the sunlight. In the distance Les Sept Isles seemed to lean towards Brittany, their grassy cliffs velvety and brown with vegetation. Hardly a strip of white remained round the stones which the sea was noiselessly beginning to cover.

"This is what I like," said Guen, watching his grand-daughter's silent enjoyment, "to run with the wind, talk to myself, and let down my line. Ah! the bottom's rocky here; good for conger eel and rock-fish; presently we shall get out to shingle, and then it will be rock again a mile and a half outside Rouzic." He drew nearer still to Simone as they cut through the water, driven by the wind which was quite soft and laden with the smell of the sun-warmed earth. They

watched the immense sweep of the horizon, where sky and sea met. Guen's heart grew tender over his grand-daughter.

"My child," he said, and she kept quite still, feeling that they were united in soul and mind, "my child, how I would like to keep you always with me!"

"I should love to stay, grandfather."

"Now I have got to know you, I shall never get accustomed to having you so far away."

"There's only one way to bring it about, grandfather," said Simone deliberately, "and you know what that is."

"Yes, I do."

He paused, for he had promised not to tell the girl anything; then he resolved to speak, moved by the infinite solemnity of everything around them; they seemed so far from petty conventionalities.

"Simone," he said, "your mother has gone to Lannion to try . . ."

"I guessed!" she broke in. "I came to France because that idea was in my mind. I could not know how matters would settle themselves, but I believe God will make everything come right in the end. It is all so sad!"

Old Guen felt Simone's hand stealing into his, and her head pressed against his shoulder. He sat motionless, overwhelmed with emotion and tenderness, while his grandchild wept for the future they both wished to see.

"We must both go on hoping, darling," he said, at last, "we must go on hoping."

The breeze fluttered lightly over the sunny water, the islands still looked tiny in the distance, and coveys of birds began rising in triangular flight, making for the open sea.

CHAPTER XII

Madame Jeanne was sitting alone in the big drawing-room with the window open, calculating columns of figures. Usually she enjoyed adding up her household bills or making out the balance-sheet of the commercial year. She had been fond of arithmetic from a child, and had kept control over all her son's business accounts; but now she was feeling anxious. She was not sure anything was wrong, but she vaguely suspected things were not very satisfactory. The two preceding years had ended with a balance on the wrong side, but she had counted on the proceeds of the oil-mill for making up the deficit. Guillaume seemed quite content, although the figures pointed to a bad year. The two wrinkles on either side of Madame Jeanne's mouth looked deeper than usual. Every now and then she lifted up her head to rest, and vaguely watched the swaying trees outside.

"Another delusion of Guillaume's!" she thought to herself. "It's going to be a bad

year, perhaps very bad. Poor boy, he doesn't realize what a pass we have come to. If only he knew! . . . but I was right to keep it from him; he has enough troubles already. Business, as far as he is concerned, is only a means to help him forget, and to occupy his thoughts. But a man ought to think of his business differently. We want my husband back again." Jobic l'Héréec's stern face rose before her mind's eye. She remembered the man whose likes and dislikes, habits, and judgments, were as much part of herself as his name. She realized how perpetually present his memory was with her, how she venerated him, always following out his views when difficult circumstances arose, satisfied that she had done right whenever she could feel that his ideas had been acted upon. It would have taken all Monsieur Jobic's great experience, his methods and his calm deliberation to extricate them from a situation like this. But he would have acted with decision, perseverance and energy, whereas Guillaume . . .

The old woman's thoughts were spoken half aloud, in fragmentary phrases, and her words echoed faintly round the large white room. Then she would return to her col-

umns of figures. Her slanting pen followed with regular movements the numbers she was adding up in her head. But it was merely mechanical work, and Madame Jeanne's reverie went on through it all.

"I can't see any way out of it. . . . It's no use telling him. . . . He does his best, but he's not a man of business. . . . And then his troubles. . . . Oh, it's all her fault, if we . . ."

The words would not pass her lips. Although Madame Jeanne was alone, a slight flush, a wave of blood from the anxious heart, stained her thin cheeks. She felt as if a long line of patient, thrifty bourgeois ancestors, who had all died rich, were reproaching her, and watching from their tombs in her native Tréguier the bankruptcy of the house of l'Héréec.

Outside the sun was beating down on the flowers. The wistaria gave out a violent perfume just beneath the window. She looked out.

How could she have left Tréguier, the birthplace of her race! She who was bound by every tie of affection and tradition, and by fifty years spent in the forgotten little corner of Brittany! She still asked herself

the question sometimes. And now it came to her mind again, with all the miserable, useless answers she had tried to give herself. Yes, that was when her troubles began. . . . The name of Tréguier struck a chord in her heart, as if it were the dirge of an ancient noble race to which she no longer belonged. What a descent from Tréguier to Lannion! She had realized this herself at the time, and had known beforehand that she would never get used to the silly, frivolous place, as she always called it. Passing Spanish visitors and several Governors of easy morals had filled it with a population thirsting only for pleasure, and frivolous to its very core. Between Tréguier and Lannion there existed one of those local feuds which Brittany fosters beneath an appearance of frigid calm. When Madame Jeanne thought of Tréguier she remembered the episcopal splendours of the ancient and austere city, the cathedral large enough to contain the whole population, with its high vaults green with the glorious moss of ages, its long files of stone knights, each in his niche, the inscriptions, the cloisters, the tower, the wonderful pierced stonework, inspired by the quaint poetic genius of bygone

workers. She saw her own seat beneath the long shafts of light from painted windows, her house with its fortress-like walls, surrounded by a winding road. She went over in her mind the names of all the nobility and townspeople who recognized her in the streets, and the visits paid her on the day of Jobic l'Héréec's sudden death. Even now there was hardly a moment in the day when she did not regret the energetic, clever man, with his dignified and imposing manner, who had placed her at the head of Tréguier bourgeois society by his solid wealth and his impressive personality. Leaving Tréguier had meant giving up all that made life worth having; and she had fought against the idea, bringing every kind of objection to bear against it. Why should they have left the works which, if not first rate, were dependable, and the canal leading to the harbour, where the schooners took their stores of oil on board? Monsieur Tanguy Morel, l'Héréec's partner, was quite capable of managing the business, and Guillaume, his father being dead, could live in honourable leisure, with hardly any work to do, and an assured future. . . . Then came the madness of falling in love with "la Lannionaise." . . .

And all had to be given up; town, factory, friends, peace of mind, the beautiful country that had become a daily necessity for the eye, the hope of dying in one's birthplace . . . all for the sake of living at Lannion, among a set of silly, fair-haired, rosy-cheeked girls who cared for nothing in the world but dancing.

All these reflections passed through her brain to the accompaniment of columns of figures, but were as painful and clear as when the catastrophe happened. Everything that had followed the wrench from her native land only came back to her memory in a confused whole, as the inevitable and logical consequence of all she had foreseen. The slow disintegration of the marriage tie, the quarrels, the extravagances of a feather-headed wife who was ambitious into the bargain, the unfortunate purchase of the oil-mill on the Guer, renewed friction following on forced economy, the separation and the new life. And when she and her son found themselves once more alone together, they were depressed and preoccupied; their intercourse was tainted by constant money worries and sad memories of the past.

Ten years of internal conflict had turned

Madame Jeanne l'Héréec's hair white. She had worked as hard as any man, and had been the real head of the house of "Veuve l'Héréec et fils." She grieved perpetually over leaving Tréguier, but before her son she contained herself. The question of the past remained a gulf between them, across which they sadly looked at each other; but when Madame Jeanne was alone at work, she gave vent to all the old grievances buried in the bottom of her heart. Her usual conclusion was that if she were a man she would return to Tréguier and build up another fortune.

But this time Madame Jeanne was prevented from bringing her reflections to their accustomed conclusion. The front door bell rang. It was so tangled in the wistaria creeper that only a muffled sound reached the house. Madame Jeanne heard someone enquiring for her son in a voice which she recognized after a lapse of ten years. Her withered cheeks suddenly turned white; she put down her pen and listened to the answer. The servant replied that her master was at the factory; there was a short interval of silence, then two shadows fell on the border of foliage on the window-sill, and Gote,

opening the drawing-room door, showed in a woman in mourning. Madame Jeanne recognized Corentine before the younger woman had time to raise her veil.

She fell back in her yellow arm-chair, amazed at such audacity, her grey eyes, radiating light from the window, fixed on Corentine. The daughter-in-law remained standing with her back to the light, unable to speak. The emotion of crossing her own threshold once again and realizing how slight were her hopes and chances of a kind welcome was almost more than she could bear. After ten years she was confronted once more by the same stern-looking woman sitting exactly where she left her; even the room had not been altered.

"Why have you come?"

"To see my husband," answered Corentine, very gently, taking courage.

"You have lost the right to see him."

"Oh, Madame, after such a long time . . . and when I am so unhappy . . ."

"Unhappy?"

"Yes . . . very unhappy."

"We too have suffered, Madame. We have borne our share . . . and ours was the hardest. . . . Guillaume is not here."

"I know it. Gote told me."

"It is useless to attempt to see him. . . . My son has made up his mind to a solitary life with me. . . . What do you want of him?"

Corentine was about to say that she had come to beg his pardon, but she refrained from answering. Mme. Jeanne kept her spell-bound under the scornful, obstinate gaze which her daughter-in-law remembered so well.

"No one asked you to come," resumed the old woman.

"No, I came of my own accord, Madame, I assure you; out of a feeling of kindness, because I am staying at Perros for a short time . . . with my father . . . and I would not go back without trying . . . Oh, Madame, don't repulse me!"

She came up to the table where Madame Jeanne had been writing.

"I am unhappy . . . I am a different woman now . . . I feel that if you would help me and be kind to me . . . perhaps Guillaume would forgive me!"

She stretched out her trembling hand to the rough ash-wood table, and in another moment would have fallen on her knees.

"You forget I am not easily deceived," said Madame Jeanne, recoiling, "you have shown too little interest in your husband for the last ten years for me to believe in this sudden burst of affection. I suspect you have other motives . . ."

As she spoke she looked contemptuously at her daughter-in-law's plain, almost shabby, clothes, which Corentine had put on purposely to avoid looking like her old self.

"You have come for money," pursued Madame Jeanne.

Madame Corentine clenched her tiny fingers as if to strike her insulter. . . . Then, crimson with shame, but sufficiently mistress of herself to keep silent, she turned and rapidly left the room, while the implacable Madame Jeanne, her eyes flaming at the intruder, followed her out of the garden-door on to the pathway.

"You separated women," she continued, "are always sure to come back some day or another, if only to beg when you are starved out. Leave the place at once. You've chosen the wrong moment. . . . We've no bread for such as you!"

Madame Corentine did not hear the last

words. She had already crossed the garden, and was nervously pressing the trefoil-shaped handle of the gate. Her heart used to beat at the click of the lock when Guillaume came home. She rushed out choking with indignation. Yet something greater than her own feeling of shame, and more powerful than the fury of temper which had driven her away once already, made her accept the injustice dealt her. Perhaps some silent emanation from the surroundings of her former life pleaded with her; at any rate she felt it impossible to leave Lannion without at least seeing the man whom she had come to meet.

She pulled down her veil, and hurried through the Rue du Pavé Neuf, past the elm-bordered avenue on the left, by the Café du Pont de Viarmes and along the gravelled jetty. Then she took another turning leading to an old house surrounded by apple-trees, where she had played as a child whenever her father had business interviews with a ship-owner. She found herself in the Allé de la Corderie which leads along past Lannion, by the banks of the Guer. This was the spot where, as a girl-wife, she used to walk on the evenings after her wedding,

smiling at the elm-trees as they whispered to her of love . . .

Her sadness was past tears. She no longer hoped to renew the ties of the past (perhaps she had never really formed any binding ones), but at any rate she could try to see him once more, ask for forgiveness, and say "I love you." And after this, let come what would, she would go away happier, more self-reliant, and, above all, feeling that she had obeyed the impulse which had driven her to humiliate herself before the man who, unknown to himself, was so close to her. Even his mother's insults seemed to call for his protection. She felt vaguely that with Guillaume present the interview would have ended differently.

She walked on, slowly now, looking across the half-empty canal at a clump of trees from the midst of which rose a chimney and a long slate roof. It was the factory, and he was there. She could not go to him before all the workmen and *employés* who had known, alas, all the past scandals. She would wait till l'Héréec's time for rowing across the Guer . . . ten strokes of the oar would bring him to her. . . . The boat was half out of the water, tied up and sticking

in the clay of the opposite bank. On the bows she could read the half-effaced letters of the name, *C-o-r-e-n-t-* . . . all else had been washed off. The river was rapidly emptying itself into the distant sea, and the water plants below the stream swayed backwards and forwards like a woman's golden hair.

Madame Corentine compared the humiliations of the present with the joys of the past. She remembered walking along this same path, a young wife hanging on her husband's arm, or with some woman friend, Simone running before them in the sunshine.

She was so tired that she sat down and leaned against a tree-trunk, just below where the boat was fastened. Several times she had the illusion of hearing her husband's voice giving orders, and it made her tremble. She looked like some poor ruined girl waiting for her lover. If any one had passed she would have run away, but no one was walking along the path, which led nowhere. Fatigue overpowered her, and she slept.

When she awoke she feared it was too late. But the tide was rising, covering the river mud and floating the boat which swayed on its rope. Men were still at work

in the factory, and the chimney sent up smoke to the sound of regular machinery.

Mme. l'Héréec stood up, half hidden by the tree. Someone had come out of the door of the works over the way. In spite of distance and falling twilight, she was not mistaken this time. She recognized the friendly gesture with which he took leave of one of his *employés*. Half-fainting, she saw him at last, quite distinctly, in the open space between the factory and the river. He walked down the path through the grass, his head held down, absorbed by the cares of business, no doubt. She wanted to call him, but she dreaded what the first word or look might be. He was slowly coming towards her; in a moment he would have untied the rope . . . then he would cross and land. . . . She closed her eyes, afraid to look again. . . . Then, hearing nothing more, she opened them and saw that he had turned sharp round along the bank and was going up the towing-path again towards the pier of Lannion. She started running, and stopped. . . . It was quite different to risk meeting him in the town or on the open road. The opportunity was lost. Any interview likely to end in forgiveness must be

without witnesses. Now she must avoid meeting him. . . .

She stood motionless, watching the diminishing figure until it was swallowed up among the distant houses.

CHAPTER XIII

Guillaume l'Héréec found his mother in the drawing-room. As he came in she gave him the comprehensive glance of a mother accustomed to read her son's mood in his face. He looked the usual business man, glad to be at home and to forget work for a while.

"Well, mother, still over your books?"

He came up to her, swinging his heavy shoulders, and kissed her forehead as usual. She still looked doubtfully at him, until she felt the muslin of her close cap pressed against her cheek by Guillaume's rough beard.

He lifted his head, as she took up from the table the wheat-ear she used to mark her place in her ledger, and slipped it between two pages.

"I have to look into them, Guillaume, you must know that. I'm afraid that this year——"

He interrupted her, as if it were more than he could bear.

"Please don't let's talk about it to-night, not till we're sure, at any rate. I've had enough of it for the present."

He had turned towards the window, his black brows drawn together, and his short, square face suddenly overcast with gloom. After he had shaken off the business worries of the day on his walk home, it was exasperating to be asked to go into accounts directly he was indoors.

"Have you had a bad day, Guillaume?"

"No worse than most."

"Did Monsieur Quimerc'h call?"

"No."

"Nor any one else who worried you?"

"No one called. I merely ask you to let me forget business and worries of all kinds. I want to forget everything if I can," he answered, gazing out at vacancy.

"But that is not always possible. Come in to dinner; you are late already. Gote has announced it twice."

He gave his mother his arm, and they went in to dinner.

For the last few days Madame Jeanne had noticed that her son was growing irritable from brooding too long over himself. He

was in one of his incurable fits of depression, such as used to overpower him in the first years of his separation. Dinner passed in almost complete silence, Madame Jeanne eating even less than usual. The practical, determined woman of business was lashing herself up; she rebelled against his useless lapses into melancholy when there was so much need of disentangling their business complications. As soon as they had returned to the drawing-room, he lit his pipe, and smoked at the open window; she settled herself beside him, and they were silent for a space, watching the already dim outline of a row of shrubs against the pale evening sky. The grinding of a pulley could be heard on the invisible river.

"Is that a boat going to the works, Guillaume?"

"No, mother," he answered quietly, "I think it's a barge that came down to-night, loaded with sand."

She pointed out of the window with her withered old hand:

"If only we could . . ."

"If only we could *what?*"

"If only we could pull up, renew our old-fashioned machinery, and try to get abreast

of the other factories along the coast. It's not past hoping for. If we two . . ."

But Guillaume shook his head.

"I say it's not past hoping for," she repeated; "we don't know that Monsieur Quimerc'h would refuse credit. I would ask him myself . . .?"

"But what's the good?"

"We must live, my dear boy."

"Who have we to live for?" he asked, sending a puff of smoke among the window-plants. His voice showed that she had touched the old wound; she guessed what he was thinking of. Still he had not seen Corentine, and nothing fresh had happened. It was only the reawakening of past memories, against which his mother had fought for so long.

"Well, you have me, Guillaume, at any rate."

He looked at her with a softened expression.

"Poor mother! But we can live on next to nothing, and everything isn't lost yet. If I'd had my child with me," he added, vaguely looking out of the window again, "I should have tried to do great things; I should have had the energy to do them."

"Look here, Guillaume," exclaimed the old woman, getting excited, "can't you understand that you ought once for all to make an effort to forget the past? You don't think of what you are saying. You had your daughter with you, on the terms of the deed, for a month out of every year. You had her for four years, and you can't say it was not more an ordeal than a pleasure!"

"It's true."

"I remember it, as you may well believe. I remember you going to meet her when the Jersey boat came from St. Malo, and how she would kiss you shyly, like a stranger, or even an enemy, after she had been put against you for eleven months. She looked as if she was wondering what you would tell her to do next, and if your wishes would not be contrary to the orders she had received elsewhere."

"And no great crime, either."

"No, you loved her, and so did I, Guillaume. But she had been brought up away from you, taught to take part against you, and you felt it. When you bought her the smallest trifle it was always, 'Do you like it? Are you sure? Do you like the things I choose?' And often your tastes were dif-

ferent. They sent you *a* child, my poor Guillaume, not *your* child. She was being trained by someone else, and I guessed, I can tell you, how you dreaded discovering a likeness to 'someone else,' to the woman from whom you were separated . . . the cause of all your troubles. No, you were quite right to give up having her here."

"I'm none so sure of that," he returned savagely, still gazing aimlessly out over the bank of foliage. One star had risen, and was faintly scintillating in the sky. He watched it for a second, seemed about to speak, and then knocked the ashes out of his pipe against the window-sill, and began striding up and down the drawing-room.

Madame l'Héréec began to regret having embarked on so dangerous a topic, and realized that for once she had made a mistake. While the mother's heart in her ached to see a man tortured and crushed by past sorrows, yet she felt that her son's weakness was humiliating to them both. As his pacing brought him near to where she sat, she took both his hands in hers and clasped them tight, as if she were trying to infuse some of her own energy into her son.

"I oughtn't to have spoken of the past,

dear Guillaume," she said. "As you say, where is the use? What we have to do is to forget it and look steadily towards the future together. You feel that, don't you?"

He withdrew his hand, and gazed at her with dim, lack-lustre eyes.

"I feel utterly discouraged. Nothing seems worth while."

She tried to joke, as an experiment.

"Discouraged, Guillaume? One would really think you were older than I. Look at me, you don't hear me say I am discouraged. But then, my poor boy, you have never seemed really young."

When the words were out, she saw what she had done.

At the callous, heartless taunt, Guillaume l'Héréec's face changed, his placid expression gave way to anger; his eyes sparkled, and he became the typical Breton, passionate, violent, and inconsistent in language.

"Never young? You are wrong there, mother, I can tell you! I *was* young once, dazzled with the future, and thinking the whole world made for happiness, but I never talked to you of such things. When I ran about the Tréguier roads as a boy, a white bird flew in front of me, always the same

one, I knew its song was an emblem of my youth. . . . Now I see nothing. . . . In those days, too, when I went through a wheatfield, I would lie down among the corn, and, whether in reality or in dreams, I felt myself soaring in the air, as light as a mayfly in spring, above the green swelling earth. Yes, I was young once, I believed in life and love. I have known one love so great and pure that I shall mourn the loss of it forever. Even now I sometimes feel that all is not over for me, and that my youth would come back if I could have something young about me once again. Ah, why did you remind me of such things? . . . You have wounded me to the quick."

He spoke like a madman, tears glittering in his eyes; and Madame Jeanne perceived that she had been even more imprudent than she had realized.

"Go and rest, Guillaume," she said gently, "we will talk again when you are calmer. . . . God knows I only speak for your good. . . . Go, and I will work at the accounts, since I have to be the practical one and bear all the anxiety for us both."

She looked after him as he left the drawing-room to go upstairs; she had not seen

him like this for some time. Sullen anger, agitation in recalling the past, complete discouragement . . . these were all bad signs which she easily recognized without knowing what was the immediate cause. She sat down before her open ledger, her head in her hands, unable to add two figures together.

CHAPTER XIV

Guillaume's bedroom took up the whole width of the house on the left-hand side. It had three windows, one looking on to the clump of trees by the Guer, another on to a narrow passage and a boundary wall, and the third on to a paved courtyard with a flight of stone steps leading into a sloping kitchen-garden. The servants had orders to leave the windows always open and the shutters closed even in winter. Guillaume enjoyed the night air, and liked to hear signs of life from the harbour and the streets. The familiar sounds soothed him, and he would sit in a basket-chair in the darkness with eyes closed till he felt sleepy. The heavily-made Breton, looking more the gamekeeper type than anything else, was, like so many of his race, as romantic in some things as a woman. He would give himself up to indescribably vague half-waking dreams, which few but himself would have understood. If at such times an unknown sound reached him, or

the cry of an animal, rendered mysterious by distance, he would suddenly start to his feet and flush with apprehension. All the old Breton superstitions were in his blood. He would light his candle, close the window, and go to bed.

On this particular evening he went straight to the mantel-piece, struck a light, and carried his candle to an old mahogany bureau with flaps and shelves. He took out a key from a pigeon-hole where it was hidden behind a box of pens and opened one of the big lower drawers.

From outside came an indefinite sound, as of myriads of tiny bells ringing softly; Guillaume paused to listen. It was rain pattering on the roof and the leaves. "A shower come up with the turn of the tide," he thought, "and no wonder, it's stifling in here."

He opened the shutters and leaned out of the window above the gravelled alley. He drew in long slow breaths of the heavy air, laden with electricity and the smells of seaweed and ripe fruit. Old forgotten thoughts stirred him. His heart began to beat at the ideas roused by his own imagination. Heavy drops, almost like hail, had begun to beat

against the outer wall, splashing the window; Guillaume drew in his head and sat down again by the bureau.

He thrust his hand into a drawer and brought out a photograph and a tiny slip of paper. The photograph was one of Simone at the age of five, and the slip of paper was the leaf from her pocket-book sent him from Ste. Brelade. He put them in front of him, leaning his burning head on his hands, and tried to evoke the image of Simone in the procession of La Clarté. From the portrait of the roguish-looking child in short petticoats, sitting crossed-legged on a wooden seat with her doll in one arm, he evoked the figure of the young girl, her hair grown darker and tied behind her head, wearing the black hat and white veil he could see so plainly before him now. He had not seen her eyes, nor could he tell what was expressed in their gaze; he had not heard her voice for years. What did he really know of her? Her hand-writing was clear, well formed, and indicated a resolute character. But what was the answer to the enigma of the written words, which had already assumed the mysterious character of relics? Who could tell him? What agony to think

their separation was irrevocable, to know that he, the father, was a stranger to his own child! He remembered the day, a Tuesday, when Simone was taken to the photographer at Tréguier. Overnight her fair hair had been done up in a mass of curl-papers, and the little girl had slept in a white hair-net belonging to her mother. . . . The photographer's shop at the top of the street had photographs in the window of the cathedral, with red lettering underneath. . . . The man had exclaimed: "What a pretty child!" He was a Parisian, only passing through Brittany. Mme. Corentine had smiled, and the grandmother was nearly crying with pride. Just at the right moment the old lady had said, "Look, darling! a little bird is going to fly out of the box!" And the surprise, the enraptured expectancy of a child of five watching for a bird to fly, had been caught and fixed for ever on the face of the portrait. . . .

Had he any other possessions which recalled her? He hesitated. He had so often struggled against the impulse to look at one other relic of the past, because it did not recall the child alone. He knew so well, to-night of all nights, that the longing for

Simone, and his love for her, would rouse his deep yearning and love for another.

A fine rain was now falling steadily in sheets upon the swaying leaves; everything green seemed drowned in ecstasy under the welcome downpour.

Guillaume searched in the drawer, pushing aside bundles of title-deeds and debentures, till he found a sketch-book, bound in grey linen, its leaves yellow and cockled with age. For ten years the book had lain there like a friend who is not so much forgotten as dreaded and avoided for fear of the memories he may recall. Guillaume opened it with shaking hands. It gave out a faint yet pleasant smell, an exhausted savour of past sweetness. It contained no sketches, but five or six pages were covered with a hurried, uneven scribble. All the capital letters were very ornate, and the others hardly formed at all. He drew one hand across his forehead, and began to read:

"My husband has asked me to write down all the important sayings and doings of Simone, our daughter, aged three years and seven months. I am delighted and flattered, being the darling's mother. The ladies here say she is like me. I think her eyes are like

her father's, when he is in a good temper with me, that is to say, most of the time. But what I really do think is that she is cleverer than all Lannion put together. We adore her. I write that here because this book is only meant for us two, or us three at most. Guillaume declares I shall write nonsense; if so, no one but we two shall ever read it."

Ah! how he remembered! One night in this very room, after they had put Simone to sleep, he had said: "You ought to write down all the funny things the child says. When we are old and she is grown up, it will make us all young again to read them together!" Corentine would not write anything while her husband was by, but next day by lunch-time the book had been bought and the first page filled.

They had stayed upstairs reading it, and were late for lunch. Madame Jeanne had scolded them.

"I am beginning to-day, July 3rd. Last night I put Simone to bed. She was very upset because the cat had died during the day.—'Mama, shall I ever see him again?'—'No.'—'Perhaps he's in heaven.'—'No, you know Heaven is only for human beings.'—

'Well, but mama, haven't cats got some little thing inside, like we have, that can fly up in the air?'—Then Simone, being in a serious and philosophical humour, pointed her finger at some large immortelles which my mother-in-law cultivates for the vases on the mantel-piece. 'Mama, are those flowers blessed?'—'Of course not, what an idea!'—'Not even their hearts?'—Her father and I thought this most remarkable.

"July 8th.—All three went for a drive in the trap, on pretext of visiting an old aunt. Simone was in pink, which suits her; she sat between us to our great delight. She kept bowing right and left, though no one was passing.—'What are you doing, baby?'—'I'm bowing to the corn, mama, and it's bowing to me.' The fields were all swaying in the wind. I couldn't help kissing Simone, and her father kissed her too, in the same place. I felt so touched. Some days he wouldn't have done it."

How cruelly these light shafts buried themselves in his heart! All the charm of young motherhood and baby-talk came back with, alas! the deeper undercurrent of conjugal love, and memories of the young wife overflowing with life and happiness. He

had forgotten the sketch-book was so full of his own name and of Corentine. The little hand which held the pen only intended to set down the history of Simone, but the memories were not all of motherhood, they were much more the records of married love. And it was for him, ten years later, to read and discover, with a heart torn with regret, the real reason of their treasuring up the story of the child's first years. The love of husband and wife breathed through every page, enshrining and then carrying away the past, as the stream of the river sweeps away the rose-coloured water-plants growing in its bosom.

What had he done to help guide or train his wife? He had never attempted to restrain even her longing for admiration, which, after all, came from her having been a spoilt and adored daughter. He had only known how to adore and make excuses, sometimes even approving of things that were not right. He began by obeying her, as he had obeyed his mother, and became the plaything of two opposing forces, until one day his weakness turned to exaggerated resistance. The first years of his marriage had been spent in cowardly, almost guilty,

happiness, and the rest in quarrelling over restrictions suggested too harshly and too late. Now he felt to the full all the pain of loss and absence. He saw what would have been the right course to take with a wife who, though of a really sweet nature, had hardly been trained or educated at all. A husband who would have been an indulgent teacher and a loving adviser could have gradually steadied anyone even so impulsive and capricious as Corentine. But all chance of repairing past inexperiences was over now. He continued reading.

"To-day is the 22nd of August. Baby cried on the beach at Trestrao. We had been to see my father. I could not console her. Guillaume took her by the hand, and drew in the sand with his stick a bird with open beak. 'Look at the lark, Simone,' he said, 'how cheerful he is, always singing. That's how you ought to be.' She promised. In the evening we passed the same place, having quite forgotten the bird of consolation. Simone came up to her father and took his hand, looking up coaxingly, as she does, and said: 'Just now I wanted to cry again, papa dear, but I remembered the lark, and so I sang instead.' I should never have

thought of such a thing to tell her. Guillaume has a sort of naïve instinct to say the right thing to children, he seems to understand their tastes and their ways. He gets nearer to their nature than I can. Oh! but this morning! Simone was playing in our room and stopped suddenly. 'Mama, I do wish something.'—'What?'—'I wish I were a twin! . . .' I looked at Guillaume. How happy life is when people are still in love!"

Guillaume l'Héréec slowly closed the book, and two tears dropped on the grey binding. The bureau with its open drawer had vanished; instead he saw the golden-haired beauty of Perros, with her pretty blue eyes and the perpetual smile which had brought so much joy, and pain as well, into his home. He sobbed with fruitless longing. In his unappeased yearning, he stretched both arms wide and drew them trembling back to his breast as if the dear head still lay there. As he touched his own body, he awoke to reality with a shudder.

"I must be mad!" he said.

He looked wildly round the room, at the chairs set against the wall, the wardrobe, the bed, with a new pang at the sight of the familiar objects.

The rain still fell with a monotonous sound, the very voice of melancholy, and gusts of wind wailed round the corners of the walls. As he listened he heard a voice calling his name. He rose and turned his ear towards the window.

"Guillaume!" cried the voice for the second time, and he ran to the window. It had not been heard in the house for ten years, but he recognized it by the beating of his heart. Whence had she come? What did she want of him? He wondered if he were dreaming.

To make sure he was awake he touched the granite window-sill, and felt the unmistakable shock of cold, damp stone. It was no delusion of his sick mind.

He leaned out, but the path was empty. The rain was lashing the trees, and on the other side of the wall the crackling of wet leaves under the rain-drops shut out all other sounds. He looked out into the impenetrable blackness of the night, as if a woman's eyes might be shining somewhere through the darkness. He tried to call out.

"Guillaume!" cried the voice once more, this time timidly, imploringly, as if exhaust-

ed with grief. He tried again to answer but could only give a hoarse gasp.

Then he realized that she was going away. One thought possessed him, to run after her, since it was really she, and ask what she wanted, to shelter her shivering body from the rain, take her in his arms, and warm her against his heart. Then he would cover her with kisses and take her back again to life and love. Corentine's voice had given him back his youth, and the love of his boyhood was calling to his lost wife.

He crept on tiptoe down the stairs, which creaked as if to protest against so late a watcher, and reached the garden door. It was bolted, but he drew the bolt, discovering too late that the key had been removed; the gate refused to open. He was turning back to go out by the other end of the hall into the courtyard, when the drawing-room door opened, and he found himself face to face with his mother.

There stood Mme. Jeanne, candlestick in hand, pale and stern as a marble statue, in the shadow thrown on her features, as she had many a time stood before Guillaume in his childhood and overawed him.

"What is it?"

"Didn't you hear?"

"Yes, perhaps before you did. But you're not going, I imagine?"

She spoke in tones of such contempt that he was almost ashamed to answer.

"I have no choice but to go. She's calling me. This door's shut, I'm going by the other."

"Useless to attempt it, they're all shut."

"You didn't . . ."

"You're not going!"

Beside himself, he rushed into the hall, but she threw herself in front of him with both arms outstretched, barring the way.

"You shall not go!" she said, in a smothered voice, her eyes flashing with the rage of a woman who has always been accustomed to command. He could have moved her with a touch, but he stepped back.

"I won't have it!" his mother continued. "Thank God I am here to watch over your honour and my own. I won't have you seen rushing after a woman you turned out of the house, after ruining you; a woman whom you have had to drag into a court of law. What are you thinking about?"

She took his hand and drew him back into the room.

"Come with me, Guillaume," she said, making him sit on a sofa beside her. The twisted wooden back cast a black shadow against the tapestry behind it. As they sat down, both fancied they heard the voice again calling faintly in the distance. Poor Corentine had evidently walked right round the house which was once hers, in the pouring rain, imploring admittance.

Madame Jeanne felt her son's hand trying to free itself from hers, but she held it fast. They sat trembling in the silence. Madame Jeanne guessed that, if he heard himself called once more, Guillaume would escape her. But nothing broke the stillness, save the rain rippling down the pipes outside.

"Of course you can still get out of the window and climb over the wall to reach that woman," she said, "but that's the only way; I've locked all the doors. You are free, as far as I'm concerned, Guillaume, and to-morrow all Lannion will be ringing with it, but I shall not be here to face the scandal; I shall have gone back to Tréguier."

As she spoke she dropped his hand. He never stirred. He hung his head, and great tears rolled down his beard. Seeing him

ready to yield, she changed her tone, and suddenly from violent anger reverted to maternal tenderness. She was not wholly bad under her coarse exterior, and now the best of her showed itself.

"My boy," she said, putting her arms round her son's neck, "listen to me, and stay where you are. All this is mere play-acting. I saw the woman who is prowling round the house earlier in the day."

"What, you saw her?"

"Yes, she came in."

"And you turned her out?"

"I had a right to, I suppose! She came for money, she tried to deceive me, she wanted to . . ."

"You turned her out, poor woman!" he interrupted, in a tone of the deepest pity. "Is she much changed?" he asked, still pursued by his dream of the night.

Mme. l'Héréec hesitated. "I don't know, I hardly looked at her. She was very shabby . . ."

"You think she really was in want? Oh, my God!" and, dropping his head on his hands, he sobbed like a child.

With extreme gentleness Mme. Jeanne bent over him till the lappets of her

cap touched the hair of the man who was crushed with grief and weeping for his lost love.

"You would have given her money, wouldn't you?" she said. "I know it, I know your good heart. But, my poor boy, your heart has already betrayed you. Did I not foresee all that happened? You were too kind, too weak. You let that woman get such a hold over you that in a very few years she would have ruined you. She was neither steady nor right-minded, to say the best of her, as you well know. She came to us with nothing—next to nothing—received everything from us, and brought us into difficulties. And, after that, we had to restore the whole of the dowry which she had spent ten times over. What claim has she on you now, I should like to know? And what more would you give a woman who has half ruined us already? . . . No, no, there was nothing for it but to do as I did. In your interests I defended us both from her, and protected the little we still possess, our honour, which she would have compromised, and the peace which has been so dearly bought."

He rose without speaking. She held him

by the sleeve, signing to him to listen again. An occasional raindrop still beat now and again on the windows, and the pipes still gurgled as the water ran through them, but no other sounds were heard. Madame Jeanne attempted to smile in the silence of the night.

"You hear?" she said, "it's over."

She waited to hear him say as usual after one of their discussions, "Thank you, mother, you were right," and half expected some expression of sullen resignation to his hard fate. But he said nothing. She had succeeded in preventing Guillaume climbing out of the window to meet his wife, but her victory was purely physical, the result of a long habit of obedience. She and her son had never for a second agreed in heart. He looked at her with eyes in which lingered no trace of filial affection, merely waiting to hear if she had anything more to say. At last she melted.

"Guillaume, my Guillaume!" she cried, throwing her arms round his neck, repeating the words as an invocation; but he made no response to her embrace, and left her without a word.

When he had finally disappeared, she anx-

iously walked on tiptoe to the door, feeling herself defeated. She listened for a moment, half ashamed of spying on him. He had gone back to his bedroom.

CHAPTER XV

Madame Corentine walked along the road to Perros under the rain, which was now abating. Her soaking dress clung to her, and impeded her movements. The wind blew from landwards, driving her along the slopes in the darkness. Fatigue and all else were forgotten in mental anguish: she was living over again the horrors of the afternoon and evening. Rebuffed, repulsed, she who had come for pardon in absolute sincerity and love! Could nothing touch them? How they still hated her, after ten years! Madame Jeanne's insults were hard enough to bear, but it was Guillaume's incomprehensible silence that tortured her.

"What more could I have done?" she cried aloud. "What more? I have done everything a woman could, and they refuse to take pity on me."

She had waited for nightfall to prowl round the house. At the time when her husband usually went to his room she had hidden herself close by, in the little empty

passage leading out into the open. From the other side of the wall, through the wet night air, she distinctly recognized the faint sound of the shutter turning, and had seen a light beneath the eaves. Guillaume was there. It was then she had called him, her whole heart longing for an answer, for one word to console her, "Corentine." Alas! she had called him three times, once under the window, once by the orchard, and once from the Rue du Pavé Neuf, near the drawing-room. She had walked round and round the house, still hoping and begging for an answer. But all in vain; her humiliation, her sufferings, and her hopes were all wasted. She hurried alone along the road between the hedges, home to her father, who was no consolation to her, and to her daughter, who was not to be told anything of the matter.

As she pondered on the condition she was reduced to through the hard-hearted obduracy of others, flashes of her old temper began to cross her mind. She repented of her impulse, and swore to herself that she would listen to no projects of reconciliation, even if she, in her turn, were implored on bended knees to listen. But this feeling passed, giving way to an overwhelming sadness, a sense

of forlornness, and the question continually throbbing through her brain, "How could I have failed to move him, when he used to love me so?" She could think of no answer, except that they had been content to know she was in exile, far beyond the sea.

The idea of taking up life again at St. Hélier seemed abhorrent to her now.

Sometimes when the wind shook the bushes and dogs howled in the distance, she remembered the hour and the place; then she would hurry, spurred on by fear, too frightened to feel the cold.

It was past midnight when the exhausted woman reached the first houses on Perros Harbour. She was suddenly seized with conventional scruples, and tried to prevent her footsteps being heard. What would be said if she were seen alone at such an hour, drenched to the skin? But all windows were closed, and only a coastguard wrapped in his cloak was on duty. She waited to cross the little courtyard till he had walked away.

Old Guen was waiting up for her in the lower room, guessing that the expedition had been a failure. He had stayed talking with Simone till very late. He had not been able to keep off the all-absorbing topic, and

what the girl said had seemed so sensible and so far beyond her years that he was still thinking of his grandchild now she had gone up to bed. At Corentine's knock he quickly opened the door. When he saw her pale, panting for breath, and splashed with mud, he understood.

"Come in, my girl!" he said, a great pity in his voice, "how late you are!"

He put his arm round her waist, and sat her in Simone's vacant chair, taking off her wet cloak, and heaping wood on the fire.

"Come to the fire and get warm. Put your feet here."

But Corentine's wild, silly pride had suddenly reawakened. She put back her wet hair and laughed a forced, shaky laugh.

"Well, I've failed!" she said, looking at her father.

"Did you see him?"

"I saw Madame Jeanne, and she hasn't altered, I can tell you. She's the same woman as ever, and hates us all. I was very silly to listen to any one and to go near such people."

Corentine was trying to visit her disappointment on her father, who sat quietly beside her, looking into her face in the in-

tervals of raking together the embers on the hearth.

"But what you did was quite right," he answered, not allowing himself to be put out of temper.

"And I'm nicely rewarded, as you see! All that I've got by it are insults and contempt."

"I'm not much surprised at that from Madame Jeanne. She never liked you. But what about him, my dear?"

"He didn't show himself."

"Perhaps he was out."

"No, no, he was there, I know, and he wouldn't come."

"Poor child!" said Guen.

He looked at her for a few seconds, thinking he had never seen anything more pitiably sad and weak than she looked.

"But why were you kept so late?" he resumed, "you ought to have taken a fly and got back here for dinner."

She blushed, and the corners of her lips went down. She turned her head from side to side, and at last hid her face on her father's shoulder.

"I can't tell you," she sobbed, "not now. . . . Let me have my cry out."

The poor man, unaccustomed to such attentions, quite simply made room for her head, that she might be more comfortable while she sobbed against his brown vest, his arm gently supporting her. He treated her like a child, only repeating from time to time, "Poor thing!"—"There, there!" as much as to say, "Cry in peace, you are with father, who loves you. Lean against me, I am old, but your weight is nothing; lie there, Corentine!"

She "let herself go" comfortably; for the first time for years she felt his love could help her. He realized this with unspeakable joy. When she was calmer he raised her. "Now you must go to your room," he said, "be careful not to wake Simone."

"Of course, Simone's asleep," she said, as if she had forgotten all about her daughter.

"You must leave her with us," said the Captain gravely.

"Leave her, after what has passed? How can you think of such a thing?"

She was quite her old self again, speaking in her imperious voice, and with her most defiant air.

"Yes, you must," said Guen quietly, "in the first place, you've given your word."

"To whom, pray?"

"To her."

"I should like to see her remind me of it, that's all! My daughter ask to see her father after he's treated me in such a way?"

"But she doesn't know anything about it, Corentine. It's no fault of hers."

"That's true."

"And she is not asking to be let go; it is I who ask you to send her."

"You, father?"

"Yes, I wish it."

Stupefied with astonishment, she stared at her old father, who was calmly opposing her without getting the least excited, apparently convinced that he was right. She had hardly ever been spoken to like that by him before.

"Now, see here," he said, "I understand Simone now. She is capable of doing what neither you nor I could bring about."

"She's an innocent baby, poor child."

"Yes, that's just why. Let her go, Corentine. I have an idea that she will find some way out. When they see her, such a lovely, loveable girl . . ."

"But don't you see, they'll want to keep her," cried Corentine, shaking him by the arm.

"Keep her?"

"Yes, keep her. They're capable of anything."

The old man rose stiffly to his feet, his face and voice betraying anger for the first time.

"I daresay they may be capable of anything, but can't you trust your own daughter?"

"Of course I can."

"No, you don't understand her. If she promises to come back, you may depend on her coming, and she will love you all the more for not treating her as a child any longer."

"And supposing they turn her out?" she said, with her usual inconsequence, forgetting that she was contradicting herself.

"I shall be on the spot to bring her back to you; and, if I do, I will never ask you to attempt anything more, I promise you. But do try this once again, for the sake of our innocent Simone, who perhaps guesses . . ."

His voice began to tremble. "Do it for my sake, I've never ceased to regret your husband."

Corentine was so worn out physically and mentally, and her father implored her with

so much pain in his voice, that she hung her head.

"I no longer care one way or the other," said the separated wife, "do as you like. I will leave her to you."

CHAPTER XVI

When Marie-Anne was told the news next morning, she looked at her father with the same expression of happiness as when she had heard that Sullian was safe. She had awakened to find her baby asleep beside her, and old Guen sitting between the bed and the cradle, looking as pleased as if he were thirty years younger, and about to take command of the *Armida.*

Madame Corentine herself was comforted by the satisfaction she had caused her relations. Now her mind was made up she hurried through her plans with a resolute haste which they all approved of. She left her daughter in the Captain's hands, without preparing the girl, or letting herself weigh the possible consequences of the proposed scheme.

The next day she hired a carriage which took her, without stopping, straight to Plouaret. To avoid going over the same ground as she had with Simone, she went on board the little English cutter, which called weekly

for eggs and butter at a small port called Portrieux, and so returned to Jersey.

Simone stayed several days at Perros. Then one afternoon, after a long talk with her aunt, now become her intimate friend, and plenty of reflection and prayer, the girl took courage, and started in the cart which had taken her to the "Pardon" at La Clarté, her box fastened on behind, and old Guen driving. Just as he was going to whip the horse, Simone jumped down.

"One minute!" she cried, "I've forgotten something!"

She ran upstairs at full speed.

"Aunt Marie, I forgot to kiss Sullian!"

Her heart beating from her hurry, she bent above the sleeping child, contemplating for a moment, with the expression of a young mother, the little face, round which such deep, unconscious peace seemed to hover.

"Babies bring luck," she said, and when she started on her journey her own face had caught the reflection of Sullian's.

CHAPTER XVII

The Captain and his grand-daughter rattled through the familiar hills and dales of the country. A few lingering flowers were spending the last of their summer perfume in the warm sun and the inland breeze. The topmost tufts of the pines glittered like aigrettes. Neither Guen nor Simone noticed the landscape. He drove along absent-mindedly, grieved at having to lose her, and wondering what sort of welcome she would get. Sometimes he felt half tempted to turn back. He would have liked, at any rate, to be present to protect Simone in her interview with Madame Jeanne (he believed he could overawe the old lady), and to bring the girl back at the first unkind word. He did not believe she could find at best the love which surrounded her at Perros. But she had refused. "I want to be alone, grandfather," she said. "Wait two hours for me near the Sand-Exchange, and if I don't come by then you will know I have been

kindly received, and you will get a letter to-morrow morning."

The Captain's thoughts still clung to his new-found grand-daughter, and her affection for him; he hardly thought of Corentine. He was amazed at Simone's calm, smiling confidence. He was too old to remember how wonderful a thing is youth, its forces still unconquered, and its illusions still fresh.

But when at last Simone found herself at the bottom of the Rue du Pavé Neuf, in sight of the brown shutters, behind which were her father and Madame Jeanne, she had a moment of hesitation. Slowly she walked the fifty feet still separating her from the house, suddenly frightened to think she had nothing ready to say. And when she pulled the wrought iron bell-handle, she felt as if the eyes of all Lannion were looking at her. Fantic, the dark-haired servant, opened the door.

"Monsieur l'Héréec?" (She dared not say "My father.")

But the maid, who had been her nurse, recognized her, and started back, pale as if she had seen the dead return to life. She lost her head completely, and ran away, holding up her hands and calling out:

"*Ciel adorable!* Our young lady has come back!"

Simone walked up the gravel path to the front of the house, where she found Gote, Madame Jeanne's own special servant from Tréguier. Gote had hurried to see the meaning of Fantic's exclamations. She immediately took her mistress's cue, and sulkily barred the way, standing literally in front of the door.

"Is my father in?" asked Simone.

"No, he's not."

"Will he be in soon?"

"I don't know."

"And my grandmother?"

The old servant looked stupefied at the audacity of asking to see Madame Jeanne.

"She isn't in either," she said.

"Very well, then, I'll come in and wait," remarked Simone.

Daunted by her resolute air, Gote made way, and stood back while Simone opened the door of the drawing-room and went in. She sat down on the sofa, more taken aback by her hostile reception than she liked to admit to herself. She put her hand to her breast, to keep down the loud beating of her heart, and tried to calm herself by looking

round at all the familiar objects in the scantily furnished room.

But she could not keep her eyes from the window. Whom would she see first, her father or Madame Jeanne? She could picture the latter coming in with her haughty air, and her white curls stiffly arranged under her cap-border.

Simone could hear the servants whispering outside. Her agitation increased, she had never felt so helpless. She waited, unconscious of the passing of time, starting at every sound, till the door opened to admit her father.

After the first glance he seemed ready to faint, and leaned with closed eyes against the door behind him. Then Simone came up and simply called him father. He opened his arms, and clasped her to him with a great sigh. She was quite still, feeling his heart beat heavily against her own, realizing that this dumb welcome meant more than all the protestations in the world, and feeling rewarded for all, no matter how things were to end.

She kept her eyes hidden against his shoulder, and he still did not try to look at her. It was enough that he had her there in his

arms, his own flesh and blood, the dear being so long separated from him; and youth seemed to spring up again in his heart.

At last they drew back and faced each other.

"Oh, Simone!" cried the father, "what a load you have lifted off me. Where have you come from?"

"From Perros. Grandfather brought me."

"What a kind idea of yours. . . . Let us sit down. . . . Did you wait long for me?"

"I don't remember. . . . Yes, I think I did wait a little. . . ."

"I knew nothing about it. You should have written."

"Why?"

"True, it didn't matter. . . . How tall you've grown! Is Monsieur Guen well?"

"Quite well."

Now he was devouring her with his eyes, as she sat facing the light. He had taken a chair to see her the better, and sat on a level with her, bending forward, hands on knees, his serious face lighted up by a smile. He seemed re-discovering his own child bit by bit, and no detail escaped him. His act-

ual words were ordinary, and he only half heard her answers. Simone, however, though so happy and so proud of the approbation she read in her father's face, could not help noticing how pitiably commonplace were the phrases they exchanged. M. l'Héréec had not inquired after his wife, he avoided her name, yet she was not absent from the minds of either. The daughter felt intuitively that her father was vividly recalling memories of the past, and that the unspoken was between them. They were both doing their best, she in sorrow and compunction, and he from habit, not to mention Madame Corentine, and this effort reduced the conversation to commonplaces such as pass between strangers.

It was natural that Simone should not quite understand her father's conflicting feelings, nor how he was dreading to lose her again after this sudden and gracious apparition. He did not know how long she intended to stop, and the fear of hearing her say that Guen was waiting to take her back then and there had repeatedly checked the question on his lips. They had been talking for quite half an hour before he had the courage to put it to her.

"Simone . . . are you . . . are you going back this evening?"

"No, father, unless you wish it."

"*I* wish it, Simone? Then it's not a mere visit?"

"Much more than a visit. I thought, and so did mother"—he flinched as in sudden pain—"that I couldn't leave Brittany without spending a few days at least with you. I have been so miserable at our estrangement. . . ."

"I have suffered from it, too, my child, I can tell you," he answered in a low voice, and looking confused, "but I thought you had forgotten me, and I didn't want to force you to come. . . . This house isn't overcheerful. . . . But as you came of your own accord, I can only thank you."

He raised his eyes, still full of an anxious, doubtful hope. "Will you stay?"

"Yes, I will. I brought my luggage as far as the *Pont de Viarmes.*"

"Well, we must send for it. Have you seen your grandmother yet?"

"No, she's out."

"She usually is at this time of the day," answered l'Héréec. Then with a sad smile he continued, "You see, she has to decide

about rooms, servants, &c. I am almost dependent on her."

There was a silence, during which both thought of Madame Jeanne.

The sound of a voice in the garden made l'Héréec turn round; he saw his mother looking through the window, and by her side the top of Gote's cap appeared above the wistaria.

"Here she comes!" he said.

They both stood up together, as the tall old lady entered quietly; her silk mantle over one arm, and her Tréguier cap shading her eyes. Madame Jeanne closed the door, and stood still, as if she had only just discovered Simone's presence. Simone turned rather pale, and took a few uncertain steps forward.

"It is I, grandmother," she said, trying to smile, and raising herself to kiss her grandmother.

Madame Jeanne did not return the kiss, she feigned not to have received it. She never took her eyes off her son, who had remained by the sofa, and it was really for his ears that her icy remark was meant.

"I suppose you are alone, Simone?" she said, controlling herself.

"Yes, quite alone," answered Simone, drawing back a little. "My mother has gone back."

She felt outraged at having to explain; and she looked at her father, whose face had changed. Though as cold outwardly as his mother, he now looked quite as determined, and spoke with great deliberation.

"I am glad she has come, mother," he said, stroking his beard, "it was her own good heart which suggested it. She has come to spend a few days with us, as she used to do."

Madame Jeanne looked at him, and understood that the strong side of his Breton character was uppermost at last.

"Very well," she answered simply, "have you told them to get a bedroom ready?"

"I waited for you to do so."

"Then I will have it done. We shall meet later at dinner."

When she had left the room, father and daughter walked to the window in embarrassment.

"Simone," said l'Héréec, taking his daughter's hand, "you mustn't be surprised or hurt. . . . Your grandmother's rather abrupt. . . . She has been soured by worry

. . . and she doesn't know you. . . . Pay no attention . . . she is kind at heart, as I know. Her devotion to me has been wonderful."

Still holding Simone's hand, he explained to her how he and Madame Jeanne lived in their house, what a careful manager she was, how clever in housekeeping and even business, and how much respected by everyone in Lannion. The more he praised and upheld his mother, the more did poor Simone feel inclined to burst into tears.

CHAPTER XVIII

The dinner was peculiar, a repast shared by three people who could none of them discuss what they were thinking about. While Madame Jeanne said grace aloud, according to her custom, she looked towards Simone to see what she would do. But at the *Benedicite* the girl quite naturally and simply crossed herself, and they sat down. In the big room every sentence prolonged itself in rumbling echoes. Madame Jeanne, sitting stiff and upright in her chair, carved and helped the others in her usual way, but her lips trembled. Her conversation was limited to requests for salt, cider, etc. When she had to ask anything concerning Simone's tastes, she addressed herself unmistakably to her son.

"I don't know if your daughter likes this," she would say, or, "We have not much to tempt her with." But the looks which accompanied these simple remarks were full of the angry surprise and anxiety roused by Simone's arrival so soon after the apparition

of Corentine. This was a visitor she could not refuse to take in, Guillaume had just put down his foot. But she would have liked some warning, and above all some limit fixed for the duration of the visit.

The gossips of Lannion would have heard in due course that Mademoiselle l'Héréec had come back to stay with her grandmother during the usual time fixed by the courts. But this *coup de théâtre* diminished her own authority, and quite altered the relations between Simone and the household of the Rue du Pavé Neuf. The old lady had no idea how long she and her son would have to live with the girl, fresh from the training of that woman in Jersey. But she realized that for this one evening at least she must keep silent, and not drive her son, *"l'homme,"* to extremities. L'Héréec hardly noticed his mother; he and his daughter might have been alone. His clear, sea-blue eyes, flecked with tiny points of gold, generally reflecting so little of the outer world, were fixed on Simone, as if magnetized by joy. He could not look away from her. But he spoke little, and felt embarrassed in Simone's presence.

The topics of the Captain and Marie-Anne having been exhausted, nothing re-

mained but the forbidden subjects of Jersey, Simone's habits, occupations and tastes, or the events leading up to her resolution to come over to France. An imprudent word might wound or shock such a young girl. Her father knew her very little, after all, and was completely ignorant of how much she might respect or love him! So, in order not to sit absolutely dumb, he alternately discussed Lannion (she trying to follow him) or apologized for the simple meal.

"This is all we take, Simone, dear. Breton habits are very informal."

The old servant was bewildered. Whenever she brought in a dish she would give a terrified glance at each of the three, and then run back to her kitchen feeling the air full of a storm about to break over this strange family meeting.

Simone was not her usual quiet self. She was frightened of her grandmother, and she could see that her father, by whose wish alone she was tolerated, was not accustomed to exercise his own authority. She began to see difficulties in the way of her plan for getting her mother received in a house where she herself, a young girl who had done no harm and was only presuming on her youth,

had come back by strategy, and apparently but for a short time.

After dinner, as Madame Jeanne was leaving the room in front of her son, she stopped in the hall, and waited for him.

"I suppose your daughter has brought luggage?" she asked.

Simone, behind her, blushed as she answered, "Yes, grandmother. . . . I thought . . . it's at the inn. . . ."

"Very well, I'll send for it. The room is ready; Simone may come up with me."

The two women went up the century-old granite staircase, Mme. Jeanne leading the way. On the first floor she hesitated a moment. Simone's heart began to beat, for on the right were the spare room, rarely occupied by visitors, and the old lady's bedroom. But Simone remembered that to the left was a little room, once hers, between one her father had used and another where her mother had entrenched herself during the last weeks of her life in Lannion. This side of the landing seemed Simone's natural place. Madame Jeanne, after a moment's reflection, turned to the left of the glazed-in passage and opened the centre door.

Nothing had been altered. There were

the blue and white striped curtains, the tiny Louis Seize mirror with true love-knots on its frame painted in the same colours, the three chintz chairs, the doll's low seat, the same statuettes on the walls, all the familiar objects were faintly visible in the shadow. The unchanging traditions of the household had kept the empty room closed, and the slight perfume in the air came from what was doubtless the same branch of rosemary that had hung above the holy-water stoup ten years ago.

"There," said Madame Jeanne. "Fantic will be up in five minutes with your trunk." The tone of her voice signified that Simone was to wait in her room for the maid.

"What do you take in the morning?" continued the old lady, as if addressing a stranger.

"I don't mind, grandmother, whatever you have yourself."

"I take nothing, and I don't know what you are accustomed to."

Simone was opening the shutters. She turned round and answered abruptly: "I used to go down and make a cup of tea while my mother went into the shop."

Madame Jeanne looked surprised at the girl speaking so boldly.

"You can make tea here if you wish," she answered. "Good-night," and she left the room.

Simone had now reached the stage when one surveys the first aspect of an unsuccessful enterprise; she was more conscious of the obstacles in her way than ever before.

L'Héréec was smoking in the garden, sitting on a bench by the lilac-tree. His mother sat down by him in the twilight, now fast falling over the little town.

"Guillaume," she said, putting her arm round his shoulder, "you have brought your daughter into my house without letting me know first . . ."

"How could I?" he asked, removing his mother's arm, which dropped rigidly back against her black gown; "I did not know myself that she was coming."

"That may be. But you must realize the situation."

"I quite understand; I am going counter to your . . . your vindictiveness."

"You are wrong, my boy," Madame l'Héréec's voice became as gentle as when she spoke to the school-children in the streets

of Lannion, "you are wrong. I have too good reason to fear the mother's influence (if you wish me to speak quite plainly) to be able to welcome warmly a child brought up entirely by her, and of whom neither I nor you know anything, if it comes to that. She *may* be unlike her mother, and I can quite understand your joy at seeing her again, my dear. Indeed I have put pressure on myself to speak to you as I am doing now."

"Oh!"

"Yes, I have, in order to warn you against being carried away by very natural feelings. This afternoon I finished balancing the accounts."

"Well?"

"Well, my boy, we have lost another twenty thousand francs this year."

L'Héréec threw his cigar into the bushes.

"That's serious," he said. "Why didn't you say so before? There was time before dinner."

"What time had I, in the midst of the agitation and worry you brought upon me? And this is the time you choose to take your daughter back, when we are obliged to retrench even more than usual! I grant you,

none of this is Simone's fault, but the mother is no child, and she means to come back too. She has sent the girl to pave the way, to insinuate herself into your affections, and to work upon your weakness."

She felt her son's firm, heavy hand pressing upon hers.

"Mother," he said, "we will leave money matters till to-morrow. My daughter is in your house to-night; I suppose you do not expect me to send her away now?"

"No."

"Then what is it that you do expect of me."

"Guillaume, what I ask of you is not to keep her long," she answered, looking at him with eyes full of a man's strength and a mother's yearning, "and to avoid the snares of the mother. I implore of you to remember that the woman who was the original cause of your money troubles is trying to get back to you and ruin you completely, and, furthermore, that you have no longer the means to attempt this last folly towards which you are being driven."

Guillaume rose, his mother anxiously watching him and waiting for his answer.

"Don't fret, mother," he said, kissing her

forehead as he walked away. She stayed listening to his departing footsteps, and, when he was out of sight, leaned forward, her head in her hands.

"The wretched boy loves her still!" she murmured, overwhelmed by the conviction.

L'Héréec felt a sense of relief and happiness. He had not gone twenty steps before one thought wiped out all else. He was surprised at himself for feeling so happy; even to breathe the pure night air was a pleasure. He hurried along. Time enough to-morrow for money worries, to-night he could only think of his child, his darling who was restored to him, and of whom he had had but a tantalizing glimpse. He was going to see her again, and the idea gave wings to his feet; he had hard work not to run upstairs three steps at a time.

He stopped before her door, hesitating, tremulous with joy, the past and possible future forgotten, and knocked.

She was expecting him. A white-clad figure gently opened the door, and the girl's cool arms went round her father's neck, and her head nestled on to his shoulder.

He kissed her repeatedly, with indescribable joy, clasping his child in his arms. "Si-

mone, Simone!" he murmured, as if all were expressed in that one word. She was dumb, feeling herself the harbinger of new life and love.

"Good-night, my blessing!" he said at last, and the white form disappeared. As he went to his room he felt his cheeks wet with tears in the cool darkness. He shut himself in to spend hours of the night in living over again, minute by minute, the wonderful new experience that had come to him.

CHAPTER XIX

The front garden was well kept. The piece of ground at the back, which was reached by four steps leading from the paved courtyard outside the offices, was much bigger, and laid out as a kitchen garden. This was only attended to once a week, by a job gardener. He turned up the earth, sowed seed, and lopped trees when required, Gote and Fantic gathering the results of his work in due course. Weeds abounded there, with nothing to check them, but the linnets, finches, and thrushes would hang on to the tallest stems and break them down with the weight of their little bodies. Grass grew principally in the paths, for the subsoil had been originally all cultivated, and vegetables grew in great profusion, crowding out everything else. Pumpkins on great expanses of manure, leeks standing up like swords, thickets of carrot-top fern, and, above all, beans of every sort and kind, dwarf or giant. Next came rows of sweet peas carefully arranged

on wooden laths; these generally flowered white, the winged blossoms looking like so many little Breton caps.

When Simone awoke, on the morning after her arrival, her first idea was to revisit the garden. Her grandmother would probably be at Mass, and her father asleep, as she heard no one stirring. She went down, hardly waiting to plait her hair, a pair of scissors in her hand.

"Good morning, Gote and Fantic!" she cried, as she passed the kitchen door. Fantic answered, and Gote grumbled out something; both stared at her, crossing the courtyard and the moss-grown steps, for the kitchen garden was their own special domain, which neither Madame Jeanne nor M. l'Héréec ever entered. But the girl had always roamed there freely, as she well remembered.

As she made her way through the tangle of vegetation, following the narrow, uneven paths streaming with dew in the morning sun, she felt again the strange sensation of solitude, almost of awe, which the garden gave her as a child. She walked under the vine-covered west wall, remembering that when her mother picked grapes she would

always leave the green foliage behind with a natural taste for colour and vernal beauty. Farther away was the pond, always a forbidden spot. "Now, Simone, you're not to go near. It's very dangerous." L'Héréec would hold her back by her skirts when she was yards away from the water, running in front of her parents. Simone remembered the young couple, as they were then, always talking in whispers behind her. Sometimes they would go into the box arbour. She tried to go in, but alas, the tufts of box had grown right across the opening, making an impenetrable barrier. She pushed her way in, head held low, and found herself inside the great green pyramid. The top was so thickly overgrown that she could not stand upright, thin patches of moss covered the ground in places, no one ever came to the arbour now for shade; it was left to spiders who spun their webs there, or field mice to hide their winter hoards. Simone's heart ached, as if with a sense of ingratitude.

She got out of the arbour, and began angrily to cut bunches of the iris which grew near the entrance. L'Héréec had once been fond of flowers, and there were the remains of a quantity of iris, gladiola and flags

bought and cultivated with great expense and care.

When she had picked quite a sheaf, Simone came back by the left, listening to the noise of navigation on the Guer and the chatter of the poultry-women jolting along in their carts in the road outside the garden wall. The sun was shining full in front of her, illuminating the pink and yellow spirals of blossom which she carried in her lifted skirt. Her father watched her coming from the courtyard; he had already been seeking her.

"There you are, my darling!"

She came down the steps, holding her dress out in both hands, to show her spoils.

L'Héréec kissed her. "Flowers!" he exclaimed. "My poor Simone, it's a long time since any flowers were brought into the house. . . . What is the matter? You look sad."

She fixed her clear, honest glance on him.

"I found the garden so terribly neglected," she said, "and it reminded me——"

Her father's face grew stern. "What did it remind you of, Simone?"

She was silent, and blushed because he did not volunteer any remark.

"Don't recall all that!" he said at last, reproachfully. "You didn't come to make me unhappy, did you? Run along, child, and arrange your flowers in the drawing-room vases. I am going to the factory."

Simone went indoors, a little disconcerted at her father's reluctance to recall the past. It seemed so easy to the young girl for people to forgive and forget! Her ideal father was the soul of generosity. How could the real flesh and blood father have failed to give her any grounds of hope? Why did he become obstinately dumb directly anything recalled Madame Corentine? So far she could not persuade herself that she had revived anything but useless reproach and painful retrospection. It seemed as if he were mutely begging her not to trifle uselessly with his feelings.

But these gloomy reflections did not last long. As Simone was arranging her flowers in the drawing-room, she saw Fantic, and gave her a telegram to send to grandfather Guen, telling him in a way he would understand that she had been made welcome and was staying on. She felt more than ever pledged to carry through the mission of filial love she had undertaken on her own initia-

tive. But how was she to set about it? Would she succeed? This was her uncertainty. One thing, however, she had already learned in her short experience of the *rôle* of peacemaker, and that was to avoid unnecessary allusion to those mysteriously unhappy years now past and gone. She resolved to be patient, good-tempered and helpful, hoping that her father and Madame Jeanne, even if they did not openly acknowledge it, would be forced to admit to themselves that her mother had trained her well.

Thus a new life began for the inmates of the old Lannion house. Not only did flowers once more garnish the empty rooms, but gradually a more cheerful atmosphere and a sense of relaxation from Madame Jeanne's oppressive influence began to make themselves felt.

Simone did not go out for the first few days. She asked Madame Jeanne for some needlework, and sat working between lunch and dinner, when they all three met at table. Solitude did not seem irksome to her. The young girl felt very peaceful and happy at reinstating herself in her former home. She was growing more self-possessed, and able to meet her father cheerfully when he came

home from the factory, tired and usually rather depressed. He revived at the sight of his daughter; she would talk to him of what she had seen or thought about, describing all the little incidents of the morning or afternoon, and by questioning him about Lannion, or even Tréguier, force him to rouse himself. Mealtimes, during which the only conversation had been business or local gossip discussed between mother and son, were now prolonged intervals of cheerful relaxation, and l'Héréec resumed his old habit of coming home by a short-cut. The little boat crossed the Guer twice a day, as in Mme. Corentine's time. Even the evenings seemed shorter; the setting sun was still warm, and all three would sit under the lilac-trees together. Sometimes, before she could stop herself, Simone would say, "We used to do so and so, we liked such and such a thing." But the thought of the absent mother, subtly present in a vague, impersonal sense, was gradually filtering through the attractive personality of the daughter, and the approval shown to Simone reflected a little credit on Corentine. Every sign, however slight, of the old resentment abating made Simone rejoice in her inmost heart, as if

Corentine were smilingly sending her a secret signal from the distance.

Madame Jeanne herself, at first deeply mistrustful of possible plots and secret understandings between Simone and her father, was daily losing some of her prejudice. She had made up her mind that a little girl brought up by her daughter-in-law was bound to be frivolous and deceitful, and taken up with vanity and pleasure-seeking. Instead, she found her grand-daughter sensible, skilful in such womanly tasks as the old lady deemed indispensable, simple in her tastes, and quite ready to submit to the acknowledged mistress of the house. It was this last attitude which helped more than anything else to alter Madame Jeanne's opinion. She still visited the factory every morning as usual, but in the afternoons she now allowed Simone to come and work beside her, in either the drawing-room or the large brown chamber where Monsieur Jobic's portrait hung. Then, as a young girl of Simone's age could not spend all the time indoors, and people were already gossiping because she was not seen about with her grandmother, Madame Jeanne began to take her out; though much against the grain.

The few old people she visited daily were naturally the most prejudiced against Corentine. She felt somewhat embarrassed at having to produce Simone without any valid explanation of how she came to be in the l'Héréecs' house at the time. But to her surprise neither Mesdemoiselles le Gallic, old Madame de Pleumeur, nor Monsieur Quimerc'h, the banker, one of her oldest friends, seemed surprised when Simone and Madame Jeanne called together. They knew the girl was in Lannion, and had expected to see her. So little physical resemblance was there between Simone and her mother that they quickly merged past memories in that feeling of half-envious curiosity which generally greets the entrance of a very young girl into a circle of antiquated fogies. They expressed admiration in a low voice when seeing Madame Jeanne to the door. "Your grand-daughter will do you credit, dear Madame! And what a comfort to poor Guillaume! Is she staying with you for long? Bring her whenever you like! . . ."

In the evening the father would ask what Madame de Pleumeur and her cronies had said, and Madame Jeanne admitted that the verdict was very favourable. She would

cheerfully discuss the weather and the people they had met out of doors, appealing to Simone with the normal grandmotherly condescension. Guillaume l'Héréec, after the first moment of pride in his little daughter and her powers of attraction, began to dread that, after old prejudices were laid to rest and the old home made habitable, she would have to go home. He had the true temperament of the visionary, and the idea that his happiness might only be temporary prevented his tasting more than an uneasy joy. Always questioning the future and meeting trouble half way, he was now beginning to be haunted with the prospect of possible parting, and the inevitable loneliness, far worse than any he had known yet, which must follow. His gloomy Breton nature was brooding over the pang of losing Simone after this glimpse, without the assurance of getting her back. The idea pursued him through all his business hours, and directly Simone was out of his sight. He wondered how he should bear to miss her voice calling good morning to him through the wall of the next room, and her footstep on the worm-eaten boards. Sometimes he felt tempted to call the girl to him during some temporary

absence of Madame Jeanne, and speak plainly to her.

"Listen," he heard himself saying, "I feel I couldn't bear to part with you, or live without you. Tell me if your mother would consent to live here, after being twice turned out? I feel that you are trying to bring us together; is it only because you are a loving daughter who does not wish to be a bone of contention between us any longer, or have you any reason to know that she would come back? Tell me quickly, and let us put an end to this torture."

And every time he felt he could give the answer himself. "No, no, she wouldn't come! It's all over, my one opportunity has been lost. My wife came here, perhaps driven by poverty, as mother thinks, or by circumstances of which Simone is and must remain ignorant. I could have taken her in, but I was too irresolute, and now we are more disunited than before. Where would be the use of bringing her back? If even she consented, how am I to know that the old life would not begin again, with its struggles, its quarrels, its perpetual friction? It's true she has brought up our child well. . . . But is that any proof that she herself

has changed for the better? Who is to say whether my little Simone's naïve gravity and serene good temper are not due to her own sweet nature far more than to any training she has received? Am I prepared deliberately to sacrifice my mother (who would certainly leave the house) to my wife, who perhaps will not bring any kind of happiness into my life?"

Sometimes he would recall Madame Jeanne's unfailing devotion, especially during the last ten trying years, and decide that he had no right to disturb Simone with painful questions so far beyond her years. He could not really make up his mind either way. After the crucial test in which his will had asserted itself, he had become his old irresolute and weak self. Afraid in different ways of each of the three women he loved, he took refuge in the inner citadel of his own soul, wasting his life and strength in plans, silent struggles, dreams and regrets.

One Sunday, about three months after her arrival, Simone and Madame Jeanne were finishing luncheon alone, l'Hérée having gone that morning to spend the day at Tréguier, when a loud peal at the bell echoed through the house. Simone went to the gar-

den door, and came back red with excitement.

"It's grandfather Guen!" she said, "with . . . "

"With whom?"

"I think it's uncle Sullian, but I've never seen him. . . . They want me to come out to them."

"Have they come to fetch you, Simone?"

The young girl saw to her surprise that Madame Jeanne had turned very pale.

"I don't suppose so," she said, "in fact I know they haven't. They've come to see me."

Madame Jeanne, who had herself perfectly under control, immediately resumed her usual manner, but not before her granddaughter had noticed her sudden movement of apprehension.

"You can ask them to be good enough to come into the drawing-room," said the old lady, "I shall be very pleased if they will, for I have a great respect for Monsieur Guen. . . . I shall be in my own room."

Simone ran out. In the framework of the little ivy porch stood Guen, his clear-eyed gaze taking in the whole garden with its clumps of trees and winding paths. Before

she even kissed him, Simone hurriedly gave her grandmother's message with great glee. But Guen drew back a few yards, so as to be clear of the house, and kissed his grandchild affectionately.

"I cannot enter any house where my daughter is not received," he said quietly, "and your mother is not here."

The girl hung her head, and the smile faded from her lips.

"Come," said Guen, "put on your hat, and we'll go for a walk in the town. Sullian wanted to see you." With pride he pointed to a tall, fresh-coloured young man, his short red beard brushed into two points, who was standing bareheaded a few paces away, quite abashed at being told that such a grand young lady was his niece.

But ten minutes later all three were chatting familiarly together, Simone walking between the two captains as they went down the elm-bordered walk to the quay. Simone and Sullian had taken to each other at first sight. They were both young, and had something alike in their frank manner and open speech.

"Well, I was very nearly never being being introduced to my niece!" exclaimed Sul-

lian; "we foundered on the rocks on a pitch-dark night!"

"Don't! I can't bear to think of it!"

"Nonsense! Such luck gives one confidence. Look at your grandfather, he's been wrecked seven times on active service."

"Eight," put in Guen apologetically, "but only twice counted. The other times I was only upset out of my rowing boat in the bay."

"All the same, father, you beat me by numbers. And think of my having a month's leave, Simone! I've never had so long before."

"Have you just come from Bordeaux?"

"I arrived the day before yesterday, but I had to wait and settle the insurance business. I thought I should go wild at the delay."

"And was Marie-Anne glad to see you?"

"Ah, my child!" interrupted Guen, "I wish you could have seen her! Her happiness would have made you cry with joy."

Simone looked from one to the other; her grandfather with a solemn air of pride at belonging to a family that had come safely out of hair-breadth escapes, and Sullian smiling at her under his red moustache, as

much as to say, "Yes, take a good look at me, little niece Simone; I am the shipwrecked sailor, the lost husband welcomed back with tears of joy, the man who thanks God he is alive to-day."

His face showed this so plainly that he thought it superfluous to mention the joy he had felt at seeing Marie-Anne again.

"And what about my baby? You don't say anything about *him*. He's a jolly little sand-boy, *isn't* he?"

The three walked along chatting, utterly oblivious of the gossips of Lannion. As it was a holiday, most of the shops were shut, but Sullian discovered a confectioner's where he bought an enormous cake for Marie-Anne, another for Simone, a third to send to his own father, and some sweets which he declared the baby should taste. He spent his money with a kind of frenzied joy, throwing the coins down for the sheer pleasure of hearing them ring on the counter. It was all life, and the fact of being alive half intoxicated the man so lately face to face with death.

They did not keep to any fixed destination, but wandered about the market-place, admiring the old houses with their shingled

roofs like coats of mail, and then, loth to separate, went round by Brélévenez Church, in order to come back to the l'Héréecs' house by the Perros Road. Guen had given Simone a letter from Corentine, containing news of Jersey, but no inquiries concerning l'Héréec or Madame Jeanne. The Captain's reserved nature led him to follow his daughter's example. He refrained from questioning Simone on her doings, or on the possibility of her great project succeeding. He felt his advice useless, and so held his tongue. Just at the moment of parting, as he was kissing her, outside the closed door of the house, he asked if any one had been uncivil to her, and that was all.

When l'Héréec came back from Tréguier towards dinner time, he was rather agitated at hearing that Guen and Sullian had been so nearly coming into his mother's house. He made Simone describe the walk through Lannion, Sullian's shipwreck, and the return to Perros.

"I should have liked to see you all when the last telegram arrived, announcing the good news," he said.

"Yes," returned Simone naïvely, "at the

mere thought Aunt Marie-Anne looked as if she were in Paradise!"

Humble little Marie-Anne, the little peasant of Perros, seemed destined to spread over whatever lives she came in contact with her own atmosphere of peaceful fireside joys and gentle mysticism.

L'Héréec pondered deeply for hours over what he had heard of her. And Simone said to herself that the day had brought good fortune; Madame Jeanne had had a kind impulse, and her father had tears in his eyes when Sullian's return was described.

CHAPTER XX

By October Simone had got into the habit of accompanying her father to the factory almost every morning. In the glazed-in passage, where brown moths taking shelter from the chilly air would softly flutter upwards, father and daughter would meet with a kiss, rejoicing that they were now living naturally, as their relationship demanded. L'Héréec, after going to his mother's room, a custom dating from his earliest childhood, would walk almost cheerfully with Simone the few hundred yards of the Rue du Pavé Neuf down to the banks of the Guer, where the boat awaited them. This was the best moment of the day, and they went very slowly, to spin it out as long as possible. Simone had always expected that the longed-for explanation would take place on one of these morning walks; her father had not spoken yet, but she was sure he could not hold out much longer.

One morning they had lingered on the bridge, watching a line of seaweed-laden

barges coming up the river, when the cathedral clock struck eight.

"What, eight already?" cried l'Héréec, "then I'm late, for a wonder. I feel so grateful to you for changing the monotony of my life. Six months ago there was nothing that *could* delay me, but now! . . . " and he walked on with a beaming smile.

Simone had taken his arm. They hurried to where the boat was swaying at the end of its chain, and went down the steps, still arm in arm. Simone stopped on a mound of grass while her father got into the boat.

"Would you like . . ." she began.

"Would I like what?"

"Would you like me to come into the mill with you?"

"No, my dear."

"It would amuse me very much to see the grindstones and the machinery, and all the stores of grain. I should like to see where you do your writing."

"I'm too busy this morning."

"Please let me come, it would be such a pleasure."

L'Héréec, already pushing off with the boat-hook, looked at Simone steadily for a moment, to see if this little comedy really

deceived her; then he said, with his saddest expression: "Simone, dear, you can't come to-day, I am expecting someone . . . . Monsieur Quimerc'h. And I don't want you to see what a wretched place it is."

His voice and look remained with her long after they had parted. She watched him row across the river, and enter the square brick building where he spent so many hours of profitless toil. All the morning his discouraged words haunted her. Of course she had noticed ever since her arrival that the easy circumstances of former days had altered, the strict economy practised in the house pointed to a state of things only one remove from absolute poverty. The worn brocade covering the drawing-room chairs darned by Madame Jeanne with scraps of yellow silk, the faded wall-papers patched with fresh pieces, the neglected garden, even the importance l'Héréec and his mother attached to any little dainty for Simone, such as the cake brought home under the old lady's cloak, or between his bundles of law papers, all this showed the girl that the mill could hardly be bringing in anything at all. But they had spared her the absolute confession of their poverty. Her father's words,

"What a wretched place it is" rang in her ears, while she sat sewing beside Madame Jeanne, who had stayed at home that morning to affix to some business papers the signature respected throughout Brittany: *Veuve l'Héréec et Fils.*

Guillaume did not come home at mid-day, but, as he sometimes lunched at the factory when he was very busy, Madame Jeanne sat down to table without paying much attention to his absence. However, when two o'clock came and he was still out, she began to get anxious.

"Come, Simone," she said, "I have to deposit some bonds at the Bank; Monsieur Quimerc'h will tell me where your father is, he saw him this morning."

Madame Jeanne always put on her best clothes when she was going to see her banker, Monsieur Quimerc'h. On this cold, damp autumn day she wore a long coat with a flat cape of marten sable covering her shoulders and fastened in front with a silver clasp. The stuff was cut as amply as a Limousine mantle, and was a relic of past grandeurs, the fur being worn in places to a mere downy surface of skin. And yet, not a woman in Lannion, young or old, looked bet-

ter or more dignified than Madame Jeanne, with her white curls, her peasant's cap and her fur pelisse. She was unmistakably an old lady of good birth, faithful to the fashions of her youth.

She walked along with a firm step and upright bearing, attentively watching for passers-by to bow to her, towards the Place du Centre, crossed the Rue St. Malo, and at the corner of the Rue de Tréguier passed through a porch flanked by granite columns, green in places with age. Monsieur Quimerc'h's offices were on the right. She pushed open a padded door and went into a waiting-room furnished with six chairs, a black desk, and an empty leather arm-chair, intended for a clerk.

Monsieur Quimerc'h, hearing the soft thud of the door, came out of his private room. At the sight of the two women he put on an air of affectionate pity, and pressed the tips of Madame Jeanne's fingers, while his eyes, sunken with hard work, but still young and bright, glanced backwards and forwards from the old lady to her grand-daughter, as if expecting to see some traces of agitation on their faces.

"Well!" he asked.

"What is it? Have you seen my son?"

"Yes, this morning."

"Where is he?"

"Why, at the factory. I sent my clerk with the answer. . . . . Haven't you . . . . ?"

Madame l'Héréec, being as tall and thin as he, could look him straight in the face, which she did, with increasing astonishment. She had put her hand in the pocket of her cloak to take out the papers she had signed, but she stopped midway, seeing that something serious was to be discussed.

"Haven't you seen him yourself?"

"No, he didn't come in to lunch."

Monsieur Quimerc'h bowed slightly, his face becoming suddenly overcast.

"Then please come in, my poor friend," he said.

Madame l'Héréec did not follow him immediately. She realized that some misfortune had happened, but could not yet understand what it might be. Her features looked already drawn and haggard with anxiety. But above all things the girl must not see her suffer. Old women, even those best trained in the school of misfortune, have their weaknesses, and she did not think it

seemly that young people should see their elders give way, instead of setting an example of firmness.

"Simone," she said, controlling her voice as much as she could, "I shall be back presently"; and, unclasping her fur as if she were going into a drawing-room, the old lady followed Monsieur Quimerc'h alone.

What the banker had to break to his old friend was ruin. He put it in few words, with as little superfluous verbiage or useless pity as he could, as a surgeon treats a patient whose courage he has reason to depend on. He told her how that very morning he had heard of the failure of a business in Paimpol which dealt with the l'Héréecs on a larger scale than any of their other clients. He had immediately gone to the factory on the Guer, to compare notes as to the credit allowed the business by Guillaume and his mother.

"It was considerable," said Madame Jeanne.

"So I saw. And everything is lost."

"Everything?"

"Absolutely."

"What is to happen?"

"You must realize."

"Sell the works?"

"Yes, and your house at Tréguier too, I fear."

She was sitting opposite his desk, her clasped hands lying on her cloak, very pale, but courageous as ever, and already planning how to parry the blow.

But at the suggestion of selling her house at Tréguier, she suddenly closed her eyes, as if to shut out a terrible vision, and became silent. Then maternal love, the strongest element in her character, swept everything else before it, and she consented.

"He cannot leave Lannion at present," she said. "His life has been spent principally here. How did he take the news?"

"He was perfectly calm, only much astonished to hear of the loans you have had from me."

Her face, so pale hitherto, flushed slightly, and her poor old eyes were wet as they met those of Monsieur Quimerc'h.

"You see I concealed it from him. It would have made him so miserable to know that I was mortgaging one after another of my possessions to keep up our credit. His work was necessary for him, Monsieur Quimerc'h, as a resource. . . . . I did every-

thing to keep him occupied . . . . and I have failed . . . . once more . . . ."

She rose, blinded with tears, and placed on the desk the little bundle of bonds which were to be a drop in the ocean of this disastrous bankruptcy. The banker took them.

"You have been an admirable mother, Madame l'Héréec," he said, "if I can be of the least service to you——"

She made a movement of thanks.

"I forgot to say," he resumed, "that at one o'clock to-day your son asked me to give him an advance on these very securities. I have just sent my clerk to give him an answer in the affirmative."

Madame Jeanne started. Why an advance under the circumstances, without consulting her? But she did not make any comment, beyond pointing to the door.

"I wish . . . . if possible . . . . ," she stammered, ". . . . such a very young girl . . . . Monsieur Quimerc'h."

"By all means, Madame."

She passed her handkerchief across her eyes, fastened her cape, and, the better to deceive the unconscious girl, raised her voice as she went out. "We will discuss the mat-

ter some other day, Monsieur Quimerc'h. I will bring my son."

But when Simone got outside with her grandmother, she saw that something very serious had taken place at the Bank. Madame Jeanne walked through the streets as if she could not see where she was going, stumbling over the uneven paving stones, and keeping her eyes down, without noticing the passers-by or anything around her. Simone dared not question her, and began to grow anxious. Why were they hurrying so? And why that look of despair on her grandmother's face as they came within sight of the trees on the banks of the Guer? Madame l'Héréec seemed to wake from a dream as they got to the house.

Instead of opening the door herself, she rang. Gote opened the door in haste, for the peal was a formidable one.

"Is my son home yet?"

"No, but he sent word he would be in to dinner."

"Where is Fantic?"

"Gone to Brélévenez to buy those hens, Madame . . . . You remember you told her to go . . . . ."

"Quite right; quite right."

Madame Jeanne was quite wide awake now.

"I want you to do me a favour," she said, turning to Simone, "the first I have ever asked of you. Go to the works and fetch your father."

Time must indeed have been an object to Madame Jeanne, or she would not have sent Simone, considering how she blamed Guillaume for allowing the girl even to walk up the promenade and the Rue du Pavé Neuf alone.

Her grandmother watched her go down to the bottom of the road before she closed the house door. Simone knew the way, and was accustomed to manage the boat. She took the oar, and by keeping a little to leeward, she was across in twenty strokes. Then, having fastened the painter to a projecting stone, she landed and walked along the gravel bank of the canal.

Nothing was moving, except some white horses grazing in the field. Before her, as the ground became more hilly, gradually rose the red brick walls, now plainly visible through the almost leafless poplar trees. She could not help thinking of the many times her father had passed along this way,

going to the monotonous task of his joyless days. She wondered at her mysterious mission, her mind turned towards her mother, unhappy and lonely in the little house at St. Hélier, and at last the burden of others' troubles seemed too heavy for her girlish shoulders.

No recollection had remained from her childhood of the road she was taking now. Golden leaves on withered stems whirled about her in the autumnal wind. When she reached the double row of poplars surrounding the mill, she remembered that her father always turned to the left in the mornings, and in the side of the wall which could not be seen from the Guer and faced the wide Rue de Kérampoint she discovered a door. It yielded to her hand, and she went in.

Within the enclosure, of recent construction, beyond a great truck full of cinders, was the mill, a long, low building with uneven windows, looking as if it had been patched and repaired till it would tumble to pieces at a touch. A "wretched place" indeed! A glance showed Simone the poverty her father was so ashamed of. The great factory with its two closed and boarded-up wings, from which came no sound of any

kind of work or machinery, had the dreary air of a house of death. The only sign of life came from the middle wing, where a few grinding wheels were at work, shaking the soil beneath. A stoker crossed the path. A porter with sacks on his back looked out of one of the windows. Simone did not feel inclined to stop. She went on her way, having caught a glimpse of a small building added on to the rest, which must be her father's office.

L'Héréec was in the outer room, lighted by a bay window looking on to the works, and did not see her coming. Head on hand, he was absorbed in some difficult task, and did not hear her come in. He was hanging over his books, comparing the figures in each, and it was only when the girl's fingers lightly touched his shoulder that he roused himself abruptly to see Simone smiling over his shoulder.

"You?"

"I've come to fetch you. Grandmother's getting anxious."

He passed his hand over his face, as if to wipe out the lines brought by hard work and the look of distress which he feared was becoming his normal expression.

"I didn't go home to lunch," he said, "I had a lot to do, my dear little Simone, you will be surprised to hear."

He looked at his daughter questioningly, to find out how much she had guessed. She answered his look with one of very gentle reproach.

"Can you come now?"

"Yes," he said, rising, "as well now as at any other time. I've finished work."

He closed the books, piled a bundle of papers on them, and called in a clerk.

"Take all these to my mother's house," he said.

The clerk, a tall, old man in a long frock coat, with his hair plastered down on his head, pushed between Simone and l'Héréec, with new-born incivility, scowling and evidently fuming at the turn events were taking. He already foresaw that old employés would be cast aside, with their length of service and failing powers as additional impediments to getting fresh employment.

"How mild it is!" said l'Héréec, when they got outside, "like a summer's day."

Simone took his arm, and to keep her from noticing the crumbling walls and the shuttered windows, where sparrows had dropped

straw from their nests, he pointed out the view. The hills were sharply defined against the sky, their crown of birch-trees turning golden under the first touch of night frosts.

The girl gazed in front of her. But she was invaded by a sense of unexplained sorrow, she wanted to weep for something nearer than the distant hills, for the secret she felt so close to her.

The door of the factory closed behind them, and they started to go down the green slope. They were alone now, but in a few minutes their privacy would be over. Simone slackened her step, then, very gently, as if taking up the thread of a previous conversation, she said: "These are my last few days with you."

A pressure of her arm, a shudder, as of a wounded man being touched on the raw, were the only answer.

"I mustn't stay much longer; my mother is alone at St. Hélier."

"Has she asked you to go back?"

"No, she allowed me to come in the first place, and would leave me here longer if I asked her to, but I ought to go to her. I am going away with a heavy heart."

"Yes, I suppose so, what with your grandmother and me . . . ."

"Oh, no! that's not what I mean. You've both been so kind. I have nothing to complain of, except that I haven't made you love me."

"Simone, what are you saying? You not loved? You . . . . my only comfort!"

Seeing that she was silently shedding tears, he took his arm from hers, and put it round her waist. He walked very gently beside her, so as to hear her if she spoke, putting his head close to her ear as we do to babies when they are in any trouble.

"What is it, Simone, my darling?" Yet he dared not look at her. She felt braver for this; and, turning her face to the river, she spoke to him in childish phrases, which were meant to convey a meaning far beyond her years. It was a gentle piece of strategy.

"I can't have made you love me if you let me go. I should like to stay here always, to live with you whom I love so dearly, and Mama who is so good. Indeed she is good! . . . . You don't know how sad it is to love you both so much, and always to be parted from either one or the other!"

He pressed her to him in silence, for the

space of a few steps, trying to quell the agitation she had roused. When he spoke his voice trembled, and he, too, looked towards the hurrying Guer, and the little town where the roof of his mother's house could be clearly distinguished.

"Simone, I have thought of that often, especially since you have been here. I knew what it must mean to you. I have been on the point of asking you whether you thought your mother would ever agree to . . . ."

"I'm sure she would!" interrupted Simone eagerly, "as sure as that I live."

At the warm assurance of his wife's love coming to him through the chaste mouth of their child, the man's doubts fled at last, and he believed her. He felt that even this belated pardon relieved him of a weight of sorrow.

They had reached the river's edge, and the clayey bank was beginning to slope down to the water where the plants grew thickest. L'Héréec stopped, and kissed his daughter's hair, holding her still pressed closely to him.

"I didn't know, my darling, I didn't know she would . . . . and now . . . . I can't explain, but I implore you to believe

me. It gives me more pain than it can you . . . . but it can't be!"

"Why, father! I am here, and I can stay. . . . . She can join us . . . why can't it be?"

"Because of something which only happened this morning. Don't say any more, I beg of you!" He seized her wrist abruptly with the gesture of a man who can no longer endure useless torture.

She was silent.

L'Héréec walked in front, trying to hide his tears, but Simone saw them, and her heart secretly rejoiced. Father spoke truly of his regret since it made him cry. He, too, would have forgotten the past. . . . . The principal obstacle had only arisen this morning, so it couldn't be Madame Jeanne, as Simone had thought . . . .

They did not speak again till the Rue du Pavé Neuf. L'Héréec was preparing to meet his mother, he did not wish her to see signs of his recent agitation. And as he had inherited a strong will from her, although it rarely showed itself, he had quite recovered his self-control by the time they reached home. He turned to his daughter at the door.

"I have to talk business with your grandmother, Simone," he said, "about some important matters which may take me to Paimpol. We shall be some time, so do you, like a dear, good child, go into church and say a prayer for us. We need it."

Simone walked slowly towards the church, feeling very helpless and childish. How could she guess at any obstacle which neither her father nor Madame Jeanne would speak of? It must be a very tremendous one, and perhaps no poor child could remove it from their path, even if she did know what it was. She had come to her father, and had tried with all her might to win his love, she had suffered in secret, and it had all been in vain.

In the church of St. Jean there is a granite pillar on the right, surmounted by a statue of St. Roch, in a yellow tunic and rose-coloured draperies. Simone sat down near by, in the dim light of the peaceful church, and took out her rosary. She said ten Hail Marys for her father and grandmother in their threatened misfortune, ten for her mother, and ten more for Grandfather Guen, and then fell asleep from sheer mental fatigue. She had lived one day of the sad life of those grown old in sorrow.

CHAPTER XXI

By the time Simone awoke, the church was full of shadows, and even the four rows of granite pillars were in darkness. Not a single prism was reflected from any window on the low walls; the only light which penetrated anywhere was one long golden beam from the setting sun, which slanted across the empty nave like a streak of fire.

The girl started up from her knees, thinking at once that her father and grandmother would be anxious.

But a special Providence watches over such things, and when she came in unperceived through the half-open gate of the courtyard, Madame Jeanne and her son were just concluding their business in the brown room. They sat facing each other, discussing Simone, at the inlaid walnut wood table, loaded with account books.

The worst was over, the acute stage when two people, each with a separate grievance, are thrown into contact and taunt each other with their pain. For different reasons, she

because of her elastic nature, and he out of disgust and indifference, had reached the point of being able to discuss their ruin with comparative calmness.

"You see," said Madame Jeanne, "that the calculations I made during your absence, as well as my poor worried brain would allow me, tally with yours. We shall have enough left to live very economically with no superfluities . . . . particularly if we keep on this house."

"If only we can!"

"I will make every sacrifice to do so, if you wish it so much. And then, even in real poverty, living in this great, empty, mortgaged house, we can still keep up our dignity. You won't leave me, Guillaume?"

He made a vague gesture. "I can tell you nothing yet. I must think it over well. There is no immediate hurry. For the time being I want you to keep as much of all this from Simone as possible. She is going to leave us, and she must not guess what straits we are reduced to."

"No. Well, Guillaume, I shall regret the child with all my heart."

"Good Lord!" cried the poor man, "and what about me?"

They went down, their minds full of the absent Simone, and feeling already equal to the task of appearing as usual before her. They kept their word. There was a strain of something heroic in the l'Héréec nature, like the granite of their native soil. During dinner they racked their brains for every sort of amusing anecdote and Breton tale which had not done duty before, and from the depths of their sore hearts managed to smile and make projects for the future, till Simone was really deceived.

"Perhaps I was mistaken after all!" she said to herself. "It's only a slight loss, which father will make up at Paimpol."

L'Héréec, indeed, made a point of talking of Paimpol, and of how he must start at three, and arrive at a certain hour to meet such and such persons, etc. But, when the meal was over, he complained of headache, and, instead of smoking in the garden as usual when the evening was fine, he suggested taking Simone for a walk in the town.

"Why in the town?" asked Madame Jeanne. "If you want anything, Fantic can go."

"No, I want a walk. We shan't be long. It will do me good."

His mother did not believe him. She saw he wanted to talk to Simone quite alone, with selfish enjoyment of his child's society, and her heart ached as they went out together. But she made no sign. He wanted to be alone with Simone, but it was to bid her good-bye in what he meant to be their last interview together.

Since the morning he had resolved to leave Lannion. What possible life could there be for him, when the Mill was sold, and he had not even the resource of work to deaden memory? Could he bring himself to share the remnants of his mother's fortune, wasted by his own fault, without contributing anything of his own? Could be withstand the perpetual sight of the brick building in the distance, dumbly reproaching him with its spirals of white smoke above the familiar poplars, and the faces of his neighbours, who had watched every step of his gradual downfall? No, he must go. He must get some employment, however trifling, if he had to ask work of his late clients, and search the whole of Brittany to get it. He could surely find food and shelter in some town where

he had no past associations to live down. It would be terrible to feel himself a homeless waif, his mother at Lannion, and his wife and child in Jersey, but anything was better than remaining in idle uselessness where he was, reduced to envying those who were formerly in his pay. . . .

But there is no depth of human despair and hopelessness without one ray of light, however tiny; one gleam of hope remained. Very distant, very faint was the glimmer, but it gave him some measure of courage to think of a possible future. He told himself that on some distant day, after other ordeals, he might perhaps find some spot on Breton soil whence he might make some sign to his exiles, and where perhaps they would come to him and let him end his days beside them.

It was a hard task to keep all this hidden in his heart, and to spend his last hour with Simone without confiding in her, letting her think that they were to meet again, if not immediately, at any rate before very long! . . . But it had to be done. No one must know of his plans—no one must be able to oppose them. . . . At such crucial moments of our lives the best and most hidden

part of our nature is the mainspring of our acts, and we become simple and loving as children. This was what Guillaume l'Hérécec realized in his hour of trial. As soon as he found himself alone with his daughter, in the streets of the town, save for a few belated people strolling along, he realized that, in compensation for having to conceal his plans from her, he owed her all the arrears of fatherly love which she had never had. He felt that he ought to tell the secret of his life to the child who had come to him full of a special hope, and who, alas, was going back disappointed in it.

With no preamble, knowing that his first words would explain all, he began to tell Simone of the part which she did not, or could not, remember. He quoted, without revealing where he had found them, phrases from the book, incidents of her babyhood, calm, happy records, in which her mother's name constantly came uppermost. He spoke almost in a whisper, leaning down to her, as they walked through the deserted town, both wrapped in a mist of memories. He was deeply moved. An ineffable consolation soothed them both, and they thrilled to the same echoes of the past. The joy and

relief to the dreamy, morbid Breton of finding a kindred soul and breaking the long silence were so great that it seemed as if his heart would burst like an overstrained bud, and fling out its blossom and fruit to the fresh air. Her joy was to feel the full tide of paternal love, and the unmistakable regret for his absent wife. They were going to part, and this last hour was to be the sweetest of their common memories. They were going to part, and they understood each other for the first time. Familiar objects, always dearer when about to be left for ever, brought back to both old and forgotten memories, God's blessed mercy to those who have strewn both sides of their life's way with sorrow. The elm-bordered Guer, the bridge over the valley of Tonguédec, houses with old sign-boards spelled out long ago by Simone's baby lips, the manifold noises of the streets, the sound of cocks crowing to the moon in enormous garden fowl-houses. To-night the town spoke to them with its myriad voices. The air was warmer than in the morning; Autumn was lulling the last of the dead leaves into a gentle slumber.

Simone listened to her father, with now

and again an answering word to show that she was listening gratefully and was touched to think how she had become his child again.

Meaning only to look at the old familiar places, they had gradually walked right around the town, and found themselves in a road leading home. Although all the streets of Lannion are so much alike, the mere fact of knowing themselves near lighted shops, likely to meet more people, seemed a check on their conversation. A friend nodded to l'Héréec, who returned the salutation, and suddenly the charm was broken. The idea of separation seemed more poignant than ever, now the tender confidences of the past were checked. By a common instinct they unlinked their arms and walked a few inches apart.

Suddenly, as if awaking from a dream, Simone's heart began to beat. She guessed and understood everything. She saw clearly, now the soothing words were no longer in her ears. The different incidents of the day, Madame Jeanne's agitation, her father's deep and sudden emotion, all these were so many proofs, and she felt as if a loud voice were crying in her ears, "Your father is ruined, he is going away for good. This is

good-bye for ever. And your mother has not been recalled from exile because he has no means of supporting her!"

She took hold of her father's arm, to save herself from falling. Oh! the horrible vision! It refused to be dispelled. Her father was going, before to-morrow night he would have left Lannion, and the irreparable would have happened. What was she to do? Who would help her? Her father was sure not to listen; he would deny it, and treat her as a little girl who could not be trusted. She felt certain he was not coming back. In the light of the shops she could see his gloomy eyes, full of some new resolution which had driven out their dreamy look. He was silent, and did not even ask if anything were wrong with her. He began to feel worn out, the load was off his mind now, and he had sunk back into his old taciturnity.

With one accord they hurried home by the nearest way. Their tender talk had given place to a few occasional words hastily exchanged between long intervals of silence. They were in sight of the house, a dark mass between its two moonlit gardens. L'Héréec opened the little gate.

"Nine o'clock!" he said, "poor mother

must have felt very lonely all this time." He ran upstairs, suddenly reminded of the old lady, and accusing himself of ingratitude.

Simone watched him disappear. Then she crossed the hall, and went into the kitchen where Fantic had been waiting to shut up the house. The servant, dozing in a low chair, her head nodding on to her breast, rose at the sound of footsteps, and turned up the wick of a tiny lamp on the table.

As she perceived Simone, her great round black eyes under their sleepy lids assumed an expression of loving anxiety. Although she had but little intelligence, her instinct of affection warned her that there was trouble in the house. As the pale young girl came towards her, finger on lip, she felt as if her master or mistress must be lying dead upstairs.

"Listen, Fantic," said Simone, "I want you to do me a favour. Go at once . . ."

"Wherever you like, Mademoiselle. How pale you are!" she interrupted.

"Fantic, it is a favour to me, and to my mother, whom you used to be fond of."

"Poor lady! Yes, Mademoiselle; wherever you like."

Fantic gazed at Simone in bewilderment,

as the girl noiselessly took two sheets of coarse paper down from the cupboard and wrote out two telegrams at the table. One was addressed to Captain Guen, Perros Town, and the other . . . Simone's fingers trembled and her writing became almost illegible as she formed the words: "Madame Corentine l'Héréec, *La Lande Fleurie, St. Hélier, Jersey.*"

"Run, run, Fantic, don't let anyone see you or hear you go. Take these to the telegraph office, there's only an hour before closing time."

The servant folded the two sheets of paper, put them in her bodice, and taking off her wooden shoes, which she carried in one hand, went out of the courtyard.

Simone stood leaning against the table, frightened at what she had done. Her heart beat to suffocation, and she unfastened her summer coat. A sudden temptation came over her to recall Fantic; she could still do it, the servant could not have gone farther than the top of the road. . . . She is turning . . . Now she has reached the office. . . . She has entered . . . The clerk is taking the telegrams. . . . Poor Simone was so bewildered that she took two

or three running steps to the door. Then she stopped and, putting her head in her hands, strove to realize that it was too late to change her mind. Fantic must be on the way back already, her wooden shoes clicking along by the wall. The words were flying to Perros and Jersey. Grandfather and mother would soon be as agitated as Simone. And to-morrow? What then?

The sound of a door closing upstairs recalled Simone to herself. The die was cast, so why waste any more regrets? It was better to be brave. . . . Father was leaving Madame Jeanne's room. . . . Grandmother was alone. . . . Simone, after thus hesitating, went upstairs.

Madame Jeanne was knitting a winter shawl in coarse black wool. She was sitting by a fireless hearth, and on the mantelpiece stood the white porcelain lamp she always used to work by at night. She went on working, her mind running riot, but her face as calm as usual, when Simone came in and stood beside her footstool.

"Grandmother," said the girl, "I have something very serious to tell you."

Madame Jeanne slowly raised her head, and let her knitting drop on to her lap.

"What now?" she said, "what has happened fresh?"

"Grandmother, you think father is only going for a few days to Paimpol?"

"So he says."

"Well, I don't believe it. There is something strange about him, his words, and his looks, I don't know what, but I'm sure he doesn't mean to come back. I offered to stay till his return, but he wouldn't let me. You see, it's no ordinary journey; father is going away for good."

Madame Jeanne put her hands on the arms of her chair, and turned her old head, weighed down with grief, towards the black mantelpiece. "Everything is possible," she said.

"So then," went on Simone, "I had a sudden idea . . . I don't know if you will forgive me, but I did it for all our sakes . . . Grandmother! I've telegraphed to Jersey . . . My mother will be here to-morrow!"

Madame Jeanne clutched the arms of her chair with her wrinkled fingers.

"Oh, grandmother, do tell me I was right, do, I beg of you."

No answer.

"You don't know," went on the girl, "my

mother is rich! She has worked hard. If money is wanted for the Mill (I fancied I gathered that much from father), she would give all she has, I know! . . . Father would not go away . . . and we could all be happy here together!"

She spoke without any hesitation now, opening her whole heart. She revealed to her grandmother, what some instinctive feeling of delicacy had kept her from telling her father, that Madame Corentine was rich now. She had not liked to ask him if his poverty were the obstacle between man and wife. Now she waited, trembling with suspense, for the verdict of the revengeful, implacable old woman, whose hostility to Madame Corentine was so well known.

Madame Jeanne drew herself up and looked at her grandchild, but there was no longer any anger nor reproach in her gaze. She even seemed inclined to pity and admire the poor child so unconsciously drawn into a family tragedy, but she did not answer Simone's eager questions.

"Go and rest, child," was all she said, "I will sit up, in case he starts to-night. I believe, as you do, that he means to leave us for ever."

The young girl bent over her.

"Grandmother, do you forgive me?"

Madame Jeanne pressed a long kiss on her forehead.

"Good night, my child," she said, in a voice of utter exhaustion, "Good night! . . . Life is very hard. . . . Leave me now."

Simone left the room, still troubled, but relieved at having said all that was in her heart. As she passed the corridor window, she saw the night was clear and fine, and her thoughts went out full of love to Grandfather Guen and to her mother who by now had read her child's appeal.

CHAPTER XXII

Whither is the vessel bound? It comes from Ploumanac'h. By the light of the moon on the open sea she may easily be recognized by the heavily built deck, the two short masts, and the brown sails dyed in oak-bark. No trawling-net trails in her wake, no towing-line floats on the water; her broad bows rise and fall on the swell of the waves like the breast of a black swan. A boy, astride of the bowsprit, sings as the ship goes on her course. It is Yvon le Dû, the cabin-boy, sent by his mother. On the middle thwart that holds the mast sits old Guen, in his linen cap, the flaps turned down that he may see through the darkness. Sullian is steering, dressed in civilian clothes; he is half sitting, half lying, in the stern, absorbed in thought. They have been gone some time, for no land is in sight. As far as eye can see, the waves are crested with silver, and their hollows are full of blue shadows. The moon is still high and bright in the sky, but soon she will begin to sink.

Guen's heart is overflowing with joy. He feels he must speak to someone, or sing, like the boy, to the stars. But, without turning round, his eyes still looking out to sea, he only says calmly, "Beautiful breeze, hey, Sullian? If we'd ordered it it couldn't be better."

His son-in-law is silent. He is still thinking of the joy of his return, his pretty Marie-Anne waiting for him on the jetty, with a radiant face, all their suspense and anguish forgotten in one long kiss.

Still the ship goes on.

"I think we must be near a sand-bank," says Guen, after a long silence, "I see sand in the water. Suppose we let down a trammel? There are red mullet here in the moonlight."

Sullian is thinking of his baby son, in his white cradle . . . the long-wished-for first born. Marie-Anne nurses him, and is proud to carry him about all over Perros. A smile flits over the proud father's lips.

The ship goes steadily on, the wind filling her sails. Farther and farther behind they leave the coast of France.

"Sullian," says Guen, "we shall be in English waters before three hours, or I don't

know my business. Corentine expects us. Then we'll tack at once. I've brought the two shawls Marie-Anne gave me for her. And I think that before mid-day to-morrow, my boy, we shall be at the mouth of the Guer, two hours from Lannion."

"That's right, father," says Sullian.

"We shan't have wasted much time, eh?" says Guen, "won't Simone be delighted?"

This time both smiled in the darkness, at the idea of her happiness. They still speak of it every now and then. The moon, grown double her size, has set in crimson light amidst the mists on the horizon line, the sea is dark again, the men are silent. But still the little cabin boy continues his song, astride of the mast.

CHAPTER XXIII

At the first glimpse of daylight Simone awoke. Her first thought was to wonder if her father had gone. She got up very cautiously and put her ear to the party wall dividing their two rooms, papered with garlands of blue roses and squares long since faded to white. L'Héréec was still there, she could hear him walking about. He would not be leaving till the time he had mentioned in the afternoon. The girl began to be seized with a panic lest "they" should not come, or should arrive too late. She counted the hours that still remained and realized that there was none too much time. As soon as she could hurry on her clothes, she went downstairs to ask if a telegram had come.

"Nothing has come, Mademoiselle," said Fantic, "Gote and I have been watching ever since the *Angelus,* and we have our hearts in our mouths at every ring . . . especially me," she added in a low voice, with a passionate glance in which she allowed her

long pent-up adoration for her absent mistress to appear.

Madame Jeanne had already been downstairs to make the same inquiries, after which she went out.

L'Héréec went to the works as usual. Simone was left alone; feverish with suspense, she roamed all over the garden, trembling every time she heard a gate open or shut. Every sound echoed in the lonely part of the town where the l'Héréecs' house stood. But each time it was either some one selling fruit or a beggar for the bread always distributed on Saturdays. Hours passed, and no news came from either Guen, Sullian or Madame Corentine. Several times Simone climbed up to the attic, from whence, through a skylight above her father's room, she could see the shimmering river between the rows of yellowing poplars. It was low tide, but the reflux of the sea was beginning to make itself felt. An invisible current drove all the mud from the banks in one direction, with an even, continuous rhythm. Masses of brown water-plants were swept along in the stream and got twisted into stationary heaps. A breeze began to stir fitfully in the tree-tops, the forerunner of the

steady wind which drives little white-winged sailing boats along the wooded creeks, and thence to the tiny Breton landing-stages.

If only she could catch a glimpse of the long-expected travellers! Perhaps the wind passing through Simone's curls had blown across the ship which carried Madame Corentine!

It is the hour when all the little fishing-smacks anchored at the distant mouth of the canal set out to sea, followed by shoals of hungry mullet, driven along by the tide. Old fisherman Penhoat is already established in his accustomed place behind a rock, with his fish-spear, but there is no sail in sight yet.

When Madame Jeanne and l'Héréec came in at mid-day, one glance at Simone showed there was no news from Perros, or Jersey. The old woman's attitude was enigmatical. She was silent and crushed, as if indifferent to anything that might happen. Yet Simone fancied she caught a fleeting expression of relief in her grandmother's face when Fantic, looking disappointed, brought in the smoking soup tureen, and it became apparent that no one in the house expected either Guen or Sullian to arrive, nor even

the poor wife, whose husband was going to exile in his turn.

L'Héréec had no idea his secret was known. Madame Jeanne had not spoken to him on the subject. He still affected to talk of his return, but it was painful to hear him, and his own distress must have been terrible as he discussed trifling details of every-day life.

"You won't forget to have the arbour in the large garden trimmed. Simone found it all overgrown and choked up, and when she comes back next time, you see. . . ."

Tears were the only answer. But the little family group were all of the same virile race, strong to control their emotions, and nothing was said.

Directly after luncheon l'Héréec went upstairs to pack, leaving the two women in the dining-room.

"You see your mother has not come," remarked Madame Jeanne.

"No, Grandmother."

"She won't come now."

"I believe she will," said Simone.

"Why?"

"Because I'm sure Grandfather Guen has started."

Madame Jeanne slowly shook her head, all the sad memories of the past evoked in her mind.

"You are mistaken," she continued, "as is natural at your age; but breaches like that can never be healed, my child."

At the same moment Fantic appeared with a telegram, which Madame Jeanne opened, though it was addressed to Simone, who nodded dumbly in assent. As the old lady read it a flood of crimson rushed into her pale wrinkled face. She held out the paper in silence. Grandfather Guen had telegraphed from the mouth of the Guer these few words:

"All arriving together. Guen."

Simone reddened too, but with excess of joy, and felt afraid her grandmother would take offence at this mute proof of her delight. She bent down in silence for a moment over the telegram; when she looked up again, she saw that no excuses were needed. Madame Jeanne had risen to her feet, and was leaning against her chair till Simone should have grown calmer.

"Come!" she said, directly the girl moved, "as they are really coming, it is for me to prepare your father."

The stern old woman would not admit, even now, that she had hoped to be spared the task; she had doubted whether Corentine would return, and had dreaded putting such a contingency into her son's head. Now things had come to a crisis, and her daughter-in-law was coming back. Something stronger than all the old accumulated grudges and grievances seemed to be forcing open the doors of the old house. Madame Jeanne felt she had had no hand in bringing the event about, whatever its consequences might be! As head of the family, it seemed her duty to announce it. She went up, followed by Simone, who was torn between joy and anxiety; and they entered l'Héréec's room.

It was strewn with his belongings. At the sight of his mother and his daughter, he started back from the trunk he was filling; it suddenly dawned upon him that they had not come to say good-bye. His face darkened; he leaned against the marble ledge of the mantelpiece with the irritated air of a man whose secret has been discovered, but who means to brave it out to the end.

"What is the matter?"

"Your wife is coming back, Guillaume," said his mother, standing facing him by the door.

"What do you mean by taunting me like this? You think to prevent me from going. If you think. . . ."

He walked towards her in a perfect fury of rage.

"Guillaume," interrupted his mother, "I believe you are going farther than you say. . . . I am not taunting or twitting you. . . . It is true . . . your wife *is* coming."

"Did you send for her?"

"You know I did not, Guillaume."

"But you allowed it! For nothing happens here without your consent. . . . I don't understand . . . after what we said . . . and placed as we are. . . . "

He turned towards Simone, as if unable to say more before her.

"Well, I let her do what she wished," said Madame Jeanne, "because I knew you were leaving us for ever!"

"Who says so?"

"I know it. Don't try to hide it. I haven't interfered because at heart you have always wished her to return. . . . Well,

now she's coming. . . . I count for nothing any longer, my day is over . . . do as you will."

"Father, take her back! I asked her to come!"

Simone went up to him, her eyes full of tears, her hands joined in supplication, and the girl looked such a beautiful personification of mingled hope and fear that l'Héréec, true to the impulses of his own passionate nature, forgot everything, his mother, her reproaches, their ruin, his intended flight. All he saw was his little girl in an irresistible attitude of prayer. His will power melted from him, and he felt shaken to the centre of his being. He actually smiled at her.

"She's coming, father! . . . She's coming by the river. . . . Grandfather Guen fetched her . . . they may be already in sight."

Moved by one impulse, they both went to the window and leaned out, Simone at one corner and l'Héréec at the other, their eyes fixed on the shining glimpses of the river between distant clumps of trees. The Guer was full up to her banks, the poplars bowing and swaying in the wind. Four great

gulls, flown back with the tide, rose on steady wings toward the sun.

Simone stretched out her hand. Her voice sounded as if it came from the land of fulfilled dreams, like that of Marie-Anne when her happiness was coming to her.

"Nothing in sight yet," said the girl, ". . . but they are coming . . . they left Perros at night. . . . Father! look towards the creek yonder. . . . Is it the hull of a vessel?. . . Yes! her bows are black! . . . She flies a blue pennon! . . . A little cabin-boy is standing up! . . . and a man with him, by the masthead! That's Sullian, father! . . . They've come! They've come!"

He was silent, absorbed in a vision vouchsafed to him, watching the ship as it passed, alternately hidden by the trees, or driven into the middle of the current. Was it bringing him back his lost happiness? Was peace coming back to the wretched old house? Thus much was not for mortal man to say. But l'Héréec felt a wave of joy surging over him that left him dumb.

He still leaned against the window, straining his eyes to see into the distance, and calling down blessings on the head of old Guen

who was giving Corentine back to him once more.

Simone, who was calmer, remembered Grandmother Jeanne. She left the window so quietly that her father did not notice her absence, and went up to the old lady, whose face had not lost its set expression.

"Grandmother," said the girl, "won't you make her welcome too? Let us all live together in love and unity. . . . We are not ruined . . . there is no more need for anxiety. Mother will make up for it all. . . ."

Madame Jeanne looked at her, and turned her head aside.

"All the better, my child," she said, "I shall be all the freer to go back to Tréguier."

THE END.

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AUTHOR
Bazin

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